

# Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness



## Back to School Issue

Volume 61 • Number 3 • 2016

The Voice and Vision of Special Education



# Contents

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## Cover Photo

Cover photo is from the Teacher and Intervener forum this past April and CEC's Convention and EXPO. Photograph courtesy of Leanne Cook.

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# Message from the Editor

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I hope everyone is having a wonderful summer. This Summer Back to School Issue will inspire you as you prepare for the upcoming school year. The issue begins with a message from the president of DVIDB. The following 3 articles continue to highlight the Spring 2016 Convention. The first article is a feature question and answer focus with Yes I Can Award winner Paloma Renee Rambana and her mother, Elizabeth. The next article provides an amazing summary of the Teacher and Intervener Forum from this year's

convention and discusses community connection to build our future. The third convention article is a summary of a student presentation on the use and benefits of audible pedestrian signals on college campuses.

An article follows the convention features on 5 “take-aways” for DVIDB from this year’s CEC 2016 Leadership Institute by Amy Parker and Nicole Johnson. Next, there is a summary of the CEC style guide and changes that are being made to the guide. Then, we have an article that highlights how instruction was transformed for students with deafblindness. This is followed by a book review on *Reading Connections: Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments*.

The last two articles are our features on a School for the Blind and a university program. The Tennessee School for the Blind provides a look at the school’s history and their current programming and educational endeavors. Lastly, we have an article on Florida State University’s Visual Disabilities Program.

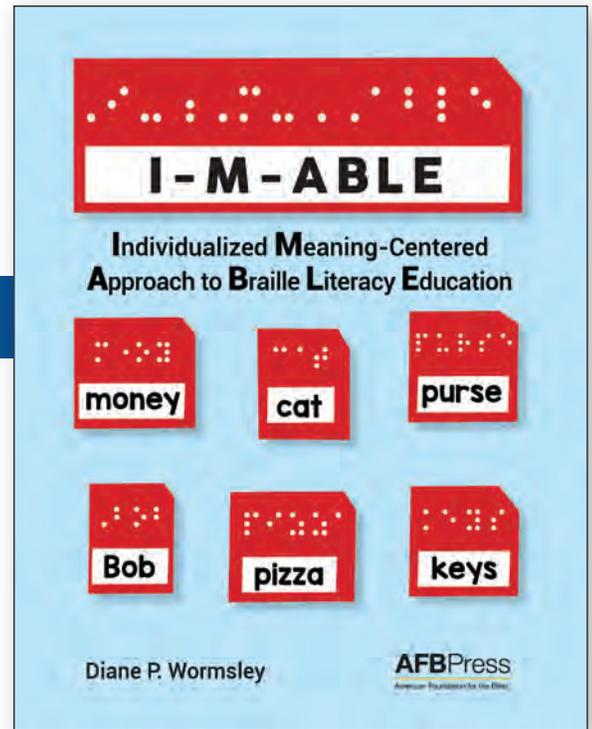
Enjoy this issue as you prepare for the school year and get inspired by the amazing things that members of our DVIDB division and our visual impairments and deafblind community are making each day!

# I-M-ABLE

Individualized **M**eaning-Centered  
Approach to **B**raille **L**iteracy **E**ducation

By Diane P. Wormsley

***I-M-ABLE***, or the Individualized **M**eaning-Centered Approach to **B**raille **L**iteracy **E**ducation, is an innovative, student-centered method for teaching braille and making it exciting for children who have difficulties learning braille. In this teaching approach, instruction is centered on continuously analyzing the strengths and needs of students, placing particular emphasis on engaging them using key vocabulary words and phrases based on their experiences and interests. This comprehensive practice guide provides detailed direction on how to implement the components of the approach.



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## President's Message

Tiffany Wild, Ph.D.  
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Summer has always been a time to spend with family and friends. I always looked forward to vacations, swimming, and cookouts. It was a time to relax and rejuvenate from the school year that had finished.

However, as a teacher I was always using my summer to prepare for the upcoming school year. Similarly, your board has been using this summer to prepare for the year ahead. The summer began with revisions and work on position papers. Under the leadership of Deborah Hatton edits and preparations to add to the library of position papers in our division has been taking place all summer. Please be sure to check our website this fall for the addition of new position papers that will guide our field moving forward.

The Professional Development Committee has been working hard to begin the long process of updating our standards for preparing teachers of students with visual impairments. This committee, which is also under the leadership of Deborah Hatton, has begun to hold a series of informational meetings about this process and has done a great job of keeping our division updated on the progress. Please look for updates of the work of this committee in upcoming issues of the “Q”, upcoming meetings and conventions, as well as in social media posts.

Amy Parker and Nicole Johnson volunteered their time to represent our division at the CEC Leadership Meeting. This is an annual meeting in the summer that brings together leadership teams from all divisions and chapters. It gives these leaders a chance to receive updates from the larger CEC organization, training on membership and leadership endeavors, and time to plan for the next year’s CEC convention. Amy and Nicole presented their notes to the board and the board will use this information in planning for the upcoming year.

Last but not least the summer has always been a time for professional development. Many of you have spent time attending training sessions,

conferences, and attending classes. Kathleen Farrand, editor of our division's journal, has been hard at work providing us all with another professional development opportunity. It is my hope that this summer issue of the "Q", can also serve as a professional development opportunity for you. The "Q" is always full of research, teaching ideas, and updates that are working to move our field forward.

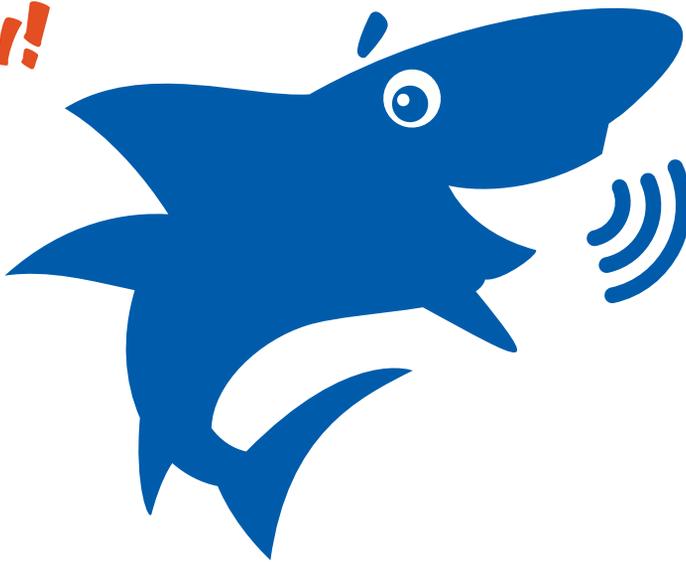
Reflecting back on this summer I cannot believe how busy our division has been. So many dedicated people are working hard to ensure that our field is moving in a positive direction and that our division is part of that movement. I appreciate all the committee members, authors of papers and articles, and division leaders that have given to our division. I personally want to thank each and every one of you for giving up valuable time over the summer and giving up precious time with family and friends.

After a busy productive summer, I can't wait to see what is in store for fall!

Here's to a wonderful school year to come!

*Tiffany Wild*

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# Q & A Feature

Meet 2016 Yes I Can Award Winner Paloma Renee Rambana and her Mother, Elizabeth.



Elizabeth and Paloma at the Capital in Washington, D.C.

**Question:** Tell us about your life, your hobbies, and interest. What makes you, you?

**Paloma:** I am adventurous! I am a JV Equestrian Team member and a Girl Scout Junior. I love to sing and swim in the summer. I love crafts, especially making planners and doing DIYs.

**Question:** Paloma, what grade will you be in?

**Paloma:** I will be entering the sixth grade.



**Question:** What is your favorite subject in school? What are some things your teachers do to make school fun and engaging?

**Paloma:** My favorite subject is science. I loved my fifth grade teacher Mrs. Ferraro. She had a good attitude all the time and she was really encouraging. She rewarded us with class Dojo points and “Mrs. Ferraro’s fortune”.

**Question:** Paloma, you were recently honored with one of CEC's Yes I Can awards for your leadership in Florida. (Read more about it here: <http://www.cec.sped.org/About-Us/CEC-Award-Programs/Yes-I-Can-Awards/Celebrate>). Why do you think that being an advocate or a voice for students, particularly students with visual impairments or deafblindness is important?

**Paloma:** Advocacy helps bring attention to big issues for people in need.

**Question:** What is a favorite memory or experience you had from the CEC convention in St. Louis?

**Paloma:** My favorite moment was meeting the Yes I Can Recipients, especially Riley and Alex.

**Question:** Paloma and Elizabeth, you recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to be a part of the CEC leadership and legislative summit. We have seen some great stories coming out about your work on the Hill. Tell us a story about your visit to the Hill. What will you remember? How would you describe the experience to others?

“Here I am with my Florida Senator, Marco Rubio. Mr. Rubio sat with me in his conference room where I explained my handheld magnifier, “Zoom Zoom”. He listened attentively and was impressed with what Zoom Zoom could do!”



**Paloma:** I met Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Gwen Graham who took me down to the House floor where I voted on two bills and got to see the votes on the jumbotron screen. It was the best day of my life!

**Question:** Elizabeth, what will you remember about Paloma's day on the Hill?

**Elizabeth:** Despite being only 10, Paloma's poise, manners, joy and charm were impressive. I was proud of how she made eye contact, shook hands, told her story and showed her magnifier. She was very effective.

**Question:** Paloma and Elizabeth, you each have shared information about the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act (the Cogswell-Macy Act) which is specific legislation to support more qualified teachers in the areas of Deaf education, education for students with visual impairments, including those who are blind and have low vision, and for students who are deafblind,

those who have combined vision and hearing loss. Students with sensory disabilities are rare in schools and often local schools need specific information about how to appropriately support students with sensory disabilities- in using technology, communication, and having teachers who "get it". What are your thoughts about the need for legislation for students who have rare disabilities?

**Paloma:** What's great about America is that everybody has the right to school. People with rare disabilities are still party of "everybody" so they should get an education so they can go places and be awesome.

**Question:** How do you see the Cogswell-Macy effort as a way to support these rare communities of students?

**Elizabeth:** Paloma has Peter's Anomaly which occurs in .006% of the population but she and students like her need special instruction and devices to excel. Cogswell-Macy would require schools to offer that support. Without it, deaf-blind individuals such disability advocate Haben Girma would not be so successful.

**Question:** Paloma, you have spoken well about many issues that students face in terms of having access to technology as well as teachers who understand their needs. Why do you think it is vital for members of Congress to understand and support the needs of all students, including those with disabilities?

**Paloma:** It is important to self-advocate using examples so other people can be aware of what's going on and do something. Even kids can make a difference with websites, marches and going to Congress. I told Senator Rubio and Representative Graham my story and showed them my devices. Congress is here to serve us!

**Question:** Paloma, what advice, based on your experiences, would you share with other students, particularly students with disabilities, about using their voices and knowledge to make a difference?

**Paloma:** Anyone can make a difference. It is easier and better, though, with help. As one of my idols Helen Keller once said “Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.”

**Question:** Elizabeth, what advice would you give to other parents and family members who are supporting their members on a life journey?

**Elizabeth:** There is an information gap between doctors, educators and direct support service providers. Parents and families should advocate for their children and teach their children to advocate for themselves while sharing their knowledge with other families to bridge the information gap.

**Question:** What encouragement would you give them in helping their children or members become community leaders and positive voices for change?

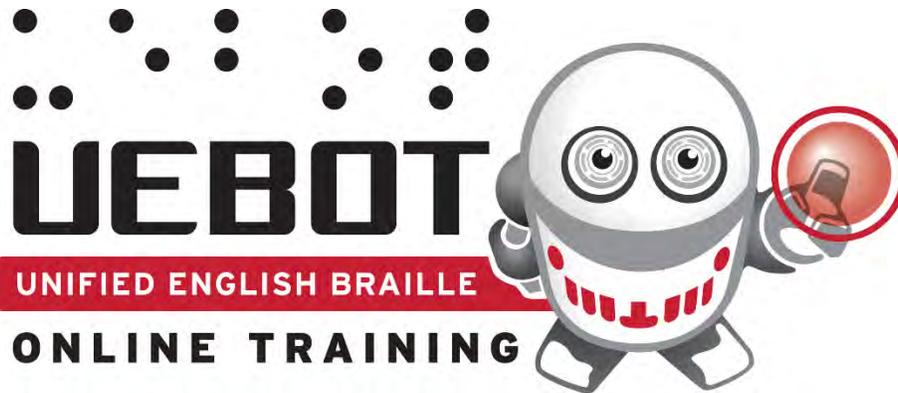
**Elizabeth:** It is critical to teach children that, in this country, anyone can be a leader or catalyst of change. We should encourage children to have a voice in their futures by taking leadership roles now, whether in student council, scouts or sports and later in government so that they can be the changes they deserve.

**Question:** Paloma, you told us at the CEC Convention in St. Louis, MO that you intended to become a Senator and eventually President of the United States one day. That gives us both excitement and hope about what our students can be! Any thoughts on what we can do as a community of educators to bring out the best in our students everyday?

**Paloma:** Not everybody learns the same way. Some students need to work differently so teachers should do hands-on projects and assignments, go on field trips to explore the outdoors and be creative indoors to find what is best.

Thank you both for your leadership and contributions! We look forward to staying in touch with you and seeing the work that your hands bring to life!

**Paloma and Elizabeth:** Thank you!



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## DVIDB's Teacher and Intervener Forum: Community Connections to Build Our Future

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“Face time” has more than one meaning in today’s world of virtual connections. Actual face time, with people gathering at the same time, in the same place is getting harder to come by for professionals in special education. With shrinking travel budgets and demanding work schedules, it seems more challenging to persuade administrators that face-to-face professional development and dialogues are essential. Particularly for the rare fields of visual impairment and deafblindness, having time together for authentic connections is all the more important because there are fewer colleagues that understand our roles in local communities.

At this year’s CEC Convention in St. Louis, DVIDB hosted a Teacher and Intervener forum which functioned as a type of community town hall and mini exhibit arena. Instead of a traditional town hall gathering in a civic building, we met on one of the topmost floors of the St. Louis Marriott Grand hotel. With windows on three sides of the room, a view of the downtown, the mighty Mississippi river, and the Arch, its silver surface gleaming in the sun,

we set up our forum with seating in the center of the room, and display tables from our sponsors around the perimeter of the room.

Our main topic of discussion involved a dialogue on the Cogswell-Macy Act led by colleagues at the American Foundation for the Blind, Mark Richert, Director of Public Policy, and Dr. Rebecca Sheffield, Senior Policy Analyst. Together, they described the shared vision for the Act that if passed, would address the dire need for qualified personnel at the local levels; establishing a more accurate child count; and creating a mechanism for states to engage in planning for students with deafness, blindness and deafblindness. At this time, the Act has been introduced in the House as HB3535 with bipartisan support. It has not been introduced in the Senate because advocates are seeking a Republican co-sponsor for the Senate version of the bill. It has taken some time for our low incidence communities to come together and build consensus and momentum around the Cogswell-Macy Act. Just the day before the Teacher and Intervener forum, AFB hosted a successful Congressional call-in day, with over 500 people from across the country making calls to representatives to support the Cogswell-Macy Act.

After the update from Mark and Rebecca, participants in the forum

asked some questions about challenges the Act may receive in that it could cost more money for Congress. Mark suggested that the argument be countered with the fact that Congress has not fully funded special education and that states already shoulder the responsibility for it. The Cogswell-Macy Act is in alignment with larger special education efforts to fully fund IDEA. Another attendee asked about the research center that is included in the language in the Act for students with visual impairments, agreeing that this is a critical area of need for the field. Rebecca described the need for students to be identified and counted correctly, not merely reported as students with multiple disabilities. A research center could serve as a mechanism for not only assisting in best practices around child find, it would also support systematically reviewing interventions for all students with visual impairment and deafblindness. With the current challenges in getting funding for low incidence research, the research center component of Cogswell-Macy is a way to ensure that our fields are prepared to infuse the best of what we know into the practice of serving students.

After the dialogue with our colleagues at AFB, the forum was opened up to discuss other observations, happenings and needs that participants experience in their practice and everyday lives. Dr. Sarah Ivy from Florida

State University brought up the ongoing challenge that students with multiple disabilities and sensory impairments are not receiving appropriate supports. Often these students are not receiving adequate attention from teachers of the visually impaired or the Deaf, hard-of-hearing teachers even though their sensory disabilities have a profound impact on learning and access to instruction. Several people agreed. One respondent from Virginia reflected that there isn't an effective collaborative model for serving students and teachers have trouble knowing how to serve students with multiple disabilities. Dr. Linda McDowell from the National Center on Deaf-Blindness mentioned that having students with multiple disabilities appropriately identified with sensory disabilities is a federal concern and this identification would assist our fields in appropriately addressing their needs.



Representatives from two states, Adam Graves from Texas and Debbie Sanders from Utah each described the advocacy and engagement of parents in recognizing the need for teachers, interveners, university programs and professional development in their states. Teachers of the deafblind are roles that are emerging nationally and internationally, out of the shared recognition that teachers with specific training and experience in deafblindness are needed to address students' unique needs. Interveners, while being an essential local role for student access to information and communication, cannot take the place of teachers of the deafblind who have knowledge of assessment, planning, collaboration, and instruction. While Adam described pilot efforts in Texas to build and refine the role of teachers of the deaf-blind with administrative support, Debbie described the infrastructure created by state based legislation in Utah where an itinerant teacher of the deafblind services networks of students and interveners in their state. As a part of the Teacher and Intervener forum this year, we also had three honored guests attend and share their perspectives on the educational needs of students with visual impairments and those with deafblindness. Aubrey Williams, a young woman from Missouri, shared her experience as a person with CHARGE Syndrome, which causes combined vision and hearing loss. Aubrey spoke

with grace and confidence about the resilience, challenges, and strengths of people with CHARGE Syndrome, a leading cause of deafblindness. She spoke of her work with the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, an organization led by family members and of the work that they do to support research and best practices in the field. When Aubrey was asked about what teachers, interveners and professionals should know, she responded that no two people are the same, but that a teacher should see the student's strengths and to build instruction and support from those strengths. Paloma Rambana, a 10-year-old student from Florida, spoke about her advocacy as a student with visual impairments. Paloma's successful campaign to raise millions of dollars for assistive technology for students with visual impairments also brought her acclaim at the CEC. This year Paloma was recognized as a "Yes I Can" award winner. When she was asked about what she would do in her future, Paloma stated first that she would pursue a Senate seat and later the Presidency, to wild cheers of approval at the forum. Later, during the time when participants were visiting sponsor tables and networking, Joseph Boggs, a young adult with deafblindness who won a CEC "Yes I Can" award from Kentucky, came to the forum and was introduced with his Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Gerald Abner, and Dr. Donna Brostek Lee from Kentucky.



Aubrey, Paloma and Joe received gift bags from DVIDB, applause and thanks from the forum participants.

As we reflect upon the successful Teacher and Intervener forum, we ask ourselves where does our strength come from? Did we draw sustenance from the river below us or the shining sun over St. Louis? When we consider our future, we know that our strength comes from connections like these, from professionals, students, and families working together in a common purpose to create a better educational system for all students with visual impairments and deafblindness. Thank you for sharing your “face time” and we look forward to another community forum in Boston, 2017!

## Family Engagement National Initiative



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*Because deaf-blindness is so rare and families are usually the ones within their community who know the most about deaf-blindness, specifically as it relates to their child, they are constantly put in the position of having to help educate others.*

Edgenie Bellah ~ Family Specialist, Texas Deafblind Project

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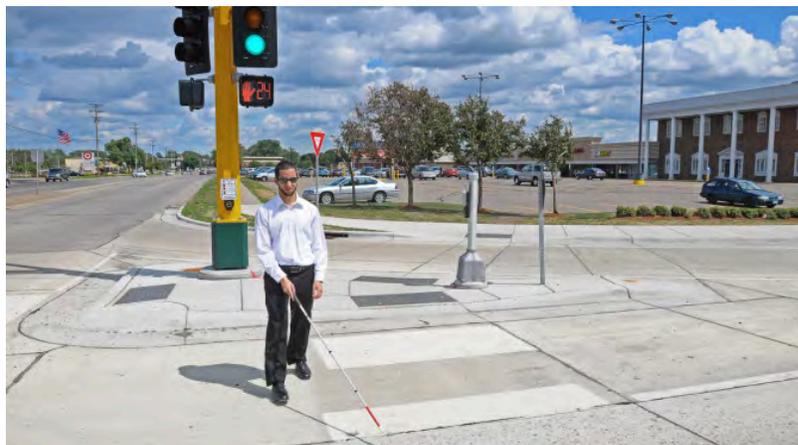


Special thanks to our sponsors who displayed exciting projects to all participants at the forum: Perkins School for the Blind; National Center on Deaf-Blindness and The Research Institute; Vanderbilt University; CHARGE Syndrome Foundation; American Foundation for the Blind; Illinois State University; Humanware; Portland State University; Missouri School for the Blind; Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Phillip J. Rock Center & School; American Printing House for the Blind; University of Nebraska; and Missouri Project for Deafblind Services.

# The Use and Benefits of Audible Pedestrian Signals on College Campuses: An Overview

Alicia Hornberger, Student, Kutztown University,  
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As defined by [apsguide.org](http://apsguide.org), audible pedestrian signals, or APS, are devices that communicate messages like WALK and DON'T WALK and their respective intervals to persons with low or no vision. These signals and the technology that is a part of them have been present, although not readily seen, for approximately the last 25 to 30 years. This being the case, it is still rare to find APS anywhere other than primary crosswalks in large cities. It is rare to find these signals even in busy intersections in small suburbs, and it is even rarer to find them on college campuses. Therefore, the question remains: If one is to find an audible signal on a college campus, why is it there, and does it do anything?



Before looking into the presence or absence of APS on college campuses and whether that means anything in regards to student safety, it is important to first address the already present convictions towards these signals. For example, Gary Mackenstadt (1983) argues against the implementation of APS technology because they “encourage the thought that, even with proper training, those with a visual impairment cannot successfully navigate street crossings without additional assistance that aren’t their own devices,” (Vol. 2, No. 3). Does this conviction still hold true? Is the apparent lack of a seemingly helpful technology actually due to it being a bigger hindrance? These questions are what formed the basis of this particular research survey.

At Kutztown University, there has been an audible pedestrian signal at the intersection between the building known as Old Main and the Schaeffer Auditorium since 1989. According to the Office of Disabilities, this signal was put in place to comply with up-and-coming ADA standards, which would help make the campus more accessible for all students. Using this information as a basis of inquiry, a set of survey questions was developed and then sent to the private colleges and universities in the state of Pennsylvania to see if the same mindset held true. Seventy-three schools were surveyed, and many of

them did not have signals on their campuses. The following comments are from some of the schools that responded to the survey:

**HAVE APS:**

“Pennsylvania Department of Transportation installed them after rerouting the road and installing new traffic lights to be compliant with ADA law.” – Geneva College

**DO NOT HAVE APS:**

“Two years ago we have three blind students. The campus went through a process to get chirper signals at two locations due to their living area. In the end, the students’ mobility specialist voted against installing the signals. She felt it gave a false sense of security and would go against her teachings. The students agreed, so we did not pursue the chirpers any further.” – King’s College

“Currently, HFU does not have any type of audible pedestrian signals. However, we have an increasing number of students on campus who use wheelchairs and we are in the beginning stages of researching lights at our busiest crosswalks. The idea to make it audible is something for me to consider too... I think that having audible pedestrian signals would show a

commitment to safety, acceptance, respect and welcoming of all people.” -  
Holy Family University

“Less than 1% of our students have a visual impairment and are  
registered with the Office of Disability Services.” – Franklin & Marshall

“Our campus does not include streets for driving, so no signals.”-  
Chatham University



As a whole, it appeared that many schools were just too self-contained to feel the need for such technology on their campuses. It was interesting to note that some schools even refrained from using such signals because the students on campus who would seemingly benefit the most from them did not want them. Is this because they feel like this would make them stand out in a negative way, or do they just not find such a technology useful? Further research into this area will look at the presence of the signals on public university campuses, the cost of installing such a signal on a university campus, as well as talking to individuals with visual impairments about their personal convictions regarding this technology.

### **References**

Mackenstadt, G. (1983). Audible street signals are barriers to the blind. *Future Reflections*, 2 (3). Retrieved from <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr02/Issue3/f020305.html>

## CEC's 2016 Leadership Institute: 5 "Take-Aways" for DVIDB

Amy T. Parker, DVIDB President-Elect, [parkera@wou.edu](mailto:parkera@wou.edu),  
and Nicole Johnson, DVIDB Secretary,  
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Every year, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) engages its many divisions and units in professional development to encourage the growth and sustainability of the organization through the Leadership Institute. This gathering, typically in Alexandria, Virginia, is an amazing opportunity to connect with professionals from across the U.S. and Canada who are deeply committed to special education and to learn about the diverse efforts that our collective units are working on. In early July 2016, Nicole Johnson, Division Secretary and I, President-Elect attended on behalf of DVIDB, not only to participate in the training opportunities but to share our Division's unique perspective within the larger CEC organization. Although there were many valuable aspects of the Leadership Institute, we would like to summarize 5 gems or "take-aways" from the gathering that specifically pertain to our own growth and viability as a Division within this larger community and to reflect how our organization contributes to the fields of visual impairment and deafblindness as a whole.

**1. The CEC is really made up of many small organizations. This is a benefit and a challenge to us.** It is interesting to note that the CEC is a membership organization that has many active smaller organizations that are affiliated with it. The CEC is governed by an elected board who hires an Executive Director, who manages a paid staff. Currently the CEC has about 20 paid staff members who manage operations for the organization in Alexandria, Virginia. Did you know that DVIDB is its own non-profit organization? This means while our DVIDB Treasurer, is responsible for submitting our tax forms, it also means that we may take action on matters that are related to our fields' specific interest. One current example of this is that DVIDB supported our community in its development of the Cogswell-Macy Act. The CEC has a policy of not supporting legislation that it perceives as outside of larger IDEA efforts, but noted that we, as a Division, may support legislation according to our own processes with our elected Board and membership. We will describe more about this specific issue in another "take-away" but suffice it to say that we have some independence of voice, which gives us a way to represent the needs of our constituents both within CEC and in the world. Another benefit and challenge is that we engage in our own marketing of our Division. Nicole and I learned from Alex Graham, the

Executive Director of CEC, that headquarters would soon be launching an active outreach campaign to all lapsed members as well as a strategy for onboarding new members. This does not mean that we, as DVIDB, won't have our own approaches for building engagement and onboarding members. The more we can work with the larger CEC, the more we can connect effectively with our international membership. We feel that this connection is vital for our rare fields and think that it is our community that keeps us strong now and for the future.

**2. The Divisions have a voice and make a difference.** This year, DVIDB's President Tiffany Wild invited me to serve in a group called the Interdivisional Caucus (IDC). The purpose of this caucus is to address the issues and concerns of all Divisions, to create a forum for communication across the Divisions, and to provide input to the CEC Board and paid staff. In attending both the online IDC meetings and the face-to-face meetings at the Leadership Institute, I came to appreciate how this structure allows for the larger organization to create approaches to address shared needs. For example, over the past 3 years, the IDC has been working with leaders within Division on Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (DCDD) on the prevention of maltreatment for students with disabilities. Over time, the DCDD

work group engaged systematically with multiple divisions to create materials and motions which were shared at CEC conventions and with the CEC Board. Another example is the work of the IDC to emphasize diversity and equity across all units and divisions. Currently the group is engaged in survey work and outreach to ensure that each component of the CEC has this focus at the forefront of planning and publications. While at the IDC meeting, the Chair asked me to provide an update on the Cogswell-Macy Act to the group. Everyone was receptive to the spirit and intent of the Act, more importantly, I was told that the Divisions want a stronger voice within the CEC to address policy issues and to have influence on how we ensure that the needs of all students with disabilities are represented, including those with low incidence disabilities.

**3. This is a big season for special education advocacy!** If you consume any form of media in the U.S. or Canada, you know that politics are dominating every aspect of our lives these days. In the United States, it is significant that the rare fields of visual impairment and deafblindness have diverse constituents who have created a comprehensive special education bill, the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act. This bipartisan bill HR 3535, which has been introduced in the House but not the Senate, is a

means of “staking a claim” in the larger special education conversation by describing the need to appropriately identify and serving students with visual impairments and deafblindness. For all educators in visual impairment and deafblindness (and those that serve Deaf and hard-of-hearing students), it is important for you to understand the purpose of this bill and how it may lead to a stronger Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for our students and families. Please read more about the Cogswell-Macy Act and take action as an educator and a member of our Division to support it: <http://www.afb.org/info/get-connected/take-action/12> In this issue you may read more about the work of a young advocate with visual impairment, Paloma Rambana, who shares her story of working on Capitol Hill to support the passage of the Cogswell-Macy Act.

IDEA was a common theme at this Leadership Institute and immediately following the leadership workshop, the CEC co-hosted a legislative summit with the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), which is one of the largest divisions within CEC. Both Nicole, as DVIDB’s Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) Coordinator, and I, as an IDC member were invited to speak about the import of our Division’s thinking related to policy for students who are visually impaired or deafblind in

different gatherings. This, to me, is worth the price of admission to CEC, to stand with and for our unique populations of students and the educators that serve them and to share why qualified personnel are essential for meeting their needs in local communities. Within the larger CEC, there are nine critical areas that are being emphasized and each has an impact on our stakeholders. It is a hope and a goal that the CMA become integrated within CEC's broader efforts and more importantly, become a part of IDEA itself so that more students can access to high quality education, no matter where they live. <http://www.specialeducationlegislativesummit.org/2016-special-education-legislative-summit-wrap-up/>

**4. We must become the “designers of learning experiences”.** One of the keynote speakers at CEC's leadership summit was Jeff Hurt from the Velvet Chainsaw consulting company. For more information about Jeff and links to his slides, go to: <https://www.cec.sped.org/About-Us/CEC-Leadership/2016-CEC-Leadership-Institute>. During his opening address and his smaller breakout session, Jeff challenged the CEC and all attendees to think about how to create authentic and engaging conversations about what really matters to our community members. More than any marketing campaign, Jeff asked us to think about our value, how to address the

question, “What’s keeping them up at night?”, and the ways we may intentionally design experiences that benefit our attendees. Jeff created some buzz when he began using the term “VUCA” and he didn’t give the audience the answer immediately about what VUCA meant. When people began to use their smartphones to find out more information about VUCA to respond to his questions, Jeff said that he was applying an adult learning principle in motivating learners become engaged in finding the answer. The term “VUCA” was used to describe the state of the world where there is constant volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. As educators in the rare disabilities of visual impairment, blindness, and deafblindness, we can easily observe these conditions in the lives of our students both at school, in the community and sometimes at home. If we are living in these conditions, how may we collectively construct learning experiences that empower participants synthesize information quickly and respond appropriately to both children and adults that we serve. How may we engage our educator community to harness their purposes, thinking of the relationships between knowledge and practice in ways that help them adapt?

Some of Jeff’s suggestions involve providing “transformational” dialogues, which provides a level of collaboration to create a shared future.

Whenever people are not afraid of true conversation and constructing a future together, Jeff shared that we are creating change through partnership. For our Division, this may be applied to making our gatherings richer with active learning experiences and dialogue. Although we have new opportunities to engage with people through technology, sometimes a personal gesture, a meaningful conversation, opportunities to be mentored, and changes to connect with other leaders are the essential for sustaining and growing as an organization. For conversations to become “transformational”, we must develop agendas, arrange room sets, and opportunities for conversation that encourage all kinds of participation.

**5. Both old and new school approaches to growth will support the CEC’s and Division’s future.** Across several practical sessions, which included the themes of marketing, understanding one’s insurance plans, and reviewing non-profit governance, their overlapping thoughts about how to use knowledge to support growth. Within the presentation on marketing, using social media, e-blasts, and other methods of outreach should be personalized to help people connect with the CEC. One “old school” method that surprised many was that sending a paper post card can be a way to personally advertise specific workshops, sessions or whole conferences. In a world with

digital media demanding consumer focus, a paper post card can be something stuck on a refrigerator or that connects with a constituents' hands. During a session on the state of the profession, inter-generational challenges across Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials were discussed and ideas were shared about how to promote authentic connections. One president from Texas' CEC Unit, a woman of the Millennial generation, shared that she choose to call each and every member of her group so that they would connect with her personally as the new leader. This was discussed as an older method of outreach that resonated across the many members of her group.

Within our insurance information session, we actually learned that our plans cover onsite gatherings, should we ever wish to host a pre-convention meeting. Many larger divisions within CEC host full conventions in different areas of the country, for us, we may use the "old school" method of hosting or co-hosting meetings in locations as pre or post-convention learning opportunities. As a Division, and not a collection of individuals, we are an organization that is exploring old and new ideas for increasing our relevance and engagement with members and non-members. We need your ideas and engagement to solve problems and have a larger impact in our fields. We

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## CEC Style Guide

Mackenzie Savaiano, Assistant Professor,  
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The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has a 30-page style guide used, “as a reference for all written materials produced by CEC, both externally and internally”. This guide is used by CEC leadership, staff, editors and proofreaders to ensure consistency of terminology and acronym used across CEC materials. This guide is coming up for revision this year, and we have submitted three recommendations that will be incorporated in the new version.

The existence of the Style Guide came to my attention when I submitted corrections to my page proofs for an article. CEC had capitalized all instances of the word “braille” and I submitted the correction of having “braille” in lowercase. I also submitted the position paper on capitalization style from the Braille Authority of North America (2006) to support my correction. The response I received was that, “per CEC guidelines, all instances of Braille in the article will be capitalized” (personal communication, March 9, 2016). I followed up regarding my concern with the Style Manual and was sent a copy and invited to share recommendations for the upcoming revision. When

looking through the guide there were three issues with terminology that I noticed.

1. The word “Braille” was always capitalized. So if you are like me, and you ever wondered why so many authors were capitalizing braille in CEC publications – it was probably not their doing.
2. The words “deaf-blind” and “deaf-blindness” were hyphenated. While there is less of a standard for these terms, we recently changed our division name to include deafblindness, unhyphenated.
3. Our division was still listed as “DVI”.

At the General Business Meeting on Thursday, April 14 at the CEC Convention in St. Louis I spoke to those present about these issues and primed everyone to expect a survey on these three items to see if there was division agreement on the terminology before sending the recommendation forward. We received 34 responses to our survey and there was majority agreement that these changes should be made (91.2% agreed for braille, 94.1% agreed for deafblind, and 94.1% agreed for DVIDB).

With the feedback provided from the survey, I made the following recommendations for the CEC Style Guide.

1. Braille: The word braille should only be capitalized if it refers to Louis Braille. In all other instances it should be lowercase (I attached the position statement from the Braille Authority of North America, 2006).
2. deaf-blind and deaf-blindness: The words deafblind and deafblindness should not include a hyphen. While federal language has not yet been changed, the single word is the standard for research, professionals in the field, and the community of individuals with deafblindness. (I attached the note from the Quarterly publication of CEC-DVIDB available from <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5> that says, "Sometimes, the word deaf-blind is used in place of deafblind. Deaf-blind is an older term that is related to statute and regulation in the United States. Many in the United States are beginning to use the term deafblind because of the recognized combined effects of vision and hearing impairment that create a unique disability. Internationally, the term deafblind is more accepted. Because CEC is an international professional organization, the term deafblind is appropriate and consistent with the trends in the United States.")
3. DVI (Division on Visual Impairments): The division of CEC is now called DVIDB (Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness).

This was voted on by the membership at the general business meeting on April 10, 2014. (I attached the minutes from that meeting).

On May 17, 2016 we received word that our input will be incorporated into the next edition of the Style Guide. We want to thank those who shared their feedback in the survey, and we look forward to being represented more accurately in future CEC publications.

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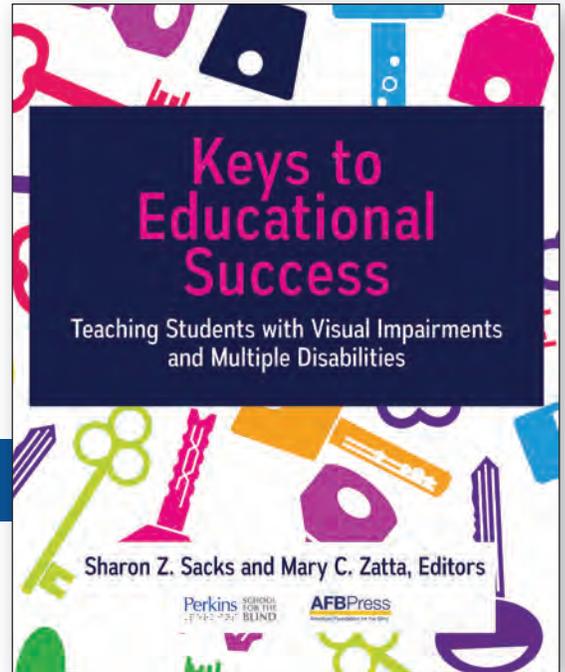
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# Creating Change: Transforming Instruction for Students with Deafblindness

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## Introduction

In 2004, the online shoe company Zappos decided to stage a daring move regarding staffing in order to meet customers' needs. Tony Hsieh, then CEO of the company, had a vision for the company that he communicated regularly with his staff: They would make the online buying experience a complete pleasure for their customers. Customer service was not to be handled by only one department; it was to be the responsibility of the entire company. So to meet staffing needs, Hsieh decided that the company would move its entire headquarters from San Francisco to Las Vegas. Surprisingly, 78% of the employees were willing to uproot their lives and make the leap with the company (Hsieh, 2010).

Change does not occur easily, but when employees understand that change events are part of a larger transformative process tied to the company's vision and goals, businesses can thrive during these challenging moments. As in business, changes in education are themselves not isolated

incidents, but instead are a part of a process with each stage dependent on the one prior. For both fields, the route to the final destination takes time. In the spring of 2015, the Region 4 Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD) began its journey of transforming educational programming for students with deafblindness. By following Kotter's eight-step model for successful organizational change, the Region 4 RDSPD was able to begin the process of transforming programming for students with deafblindness.

### **Background**

In the spring of 2015, annual census data revealed that a member district had 22 students with deafblindness. During the 2014–2015 school year, the Region 4 RDSPD was directly serving only one of the 22 identified students. Having 22 students in a single district was incredible considering that across the nation in 2014, there were a total of 9,384 students with deafblindness (The National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2015). Within this

An RDSPD is a unique programming option within the state of Texas in which school districts and charter schools enter into shared service arrangements (i.e., a legally binding contract) to consolidate special education services that benefit students who are deaf and hard of hearing. RDSPDs were established in an attempt to provide services more effectively and efficiently due to the low-incidence nature of hearing loss (TEA, 2013).

data there was an inherent challenge: How could the Region 4 RDSPD provide high-quality instruction for this student population?

In answering this question, I had to find the “why.” Without it, there would be no moving forward. Simon Sinek, author of *Start with Why*, states, “the inspired leaders and the inspired organizations—regardless of their size, regardless of their industry—all think, act, and communicate from the inside out” (Sinek, 2009). He goes on to say, “People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it” (Sinek, 2009). The inspired organizations, as Sinek calls them, are able to communicate in order the why, how, and what regarding what they do, and it is this simple-yet-powerful approach that drives others to action.

So what was the Region 4 RDSPD’s why? *For all students, the Region 4 RDSPD believes in equal access to educational opportunities.* The way the program provides equal access to educational opportunities is through a team approach, focusing on collaboration and continuous communication. For students with deafblindness in particular, the program would provide a district-level team of decidedly knowledgeable and well-trained individuals who could work with various outside agencies, multidisciplinary teams, families, and students to assess and plan for high-quality instruction. Had the

message been, “Look, we are all teachers, and we need to teach these students,” the program most likely would not have been very successful.

Identifying the why was critical, but this was only the beginning. To begin the transformation process for the program, I referred back to something I had learned in my administrator studies. John Kotter, author of “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” identifies eight steps to successful organizational change:

1. Establish a sense of urgency.
2. Form a powerful guiding coalition.
3. Create a vision.
4. Communicate the vision.
5. Empower others to act on the vision.
6. Plan for and create short-term wins.
7. Consolidate improvements and produce more change.
8. Institutionalize new approaches.

(Kotter, 1995, pp. 59–67)

By following this process, the program was able to make tremendous gains in a year and a half.

## Implementation

Though creating a sense of urgency was the first step, I needed to recognize that various groups were motivated by different factors (e.g., campus teams compared to district administration). Recognizing the order in which groups needed to hear the vision and the plan was equally important. I decided to start by first communicating the plan for students with deafblindness with the Region 4 RDSPD Management Board.

Every RDSPD has a management board that governs the actions of the program. The power of knowing the why was extremely important in order to convey why 22 students deserved a completely new approach in how they were being served educationally. After reviewing current national and state agendas, the current landscape of instructional programming for students with deafblindness within the member district, and the scope of my plan, the management board voted and approved the proposal.

The work then began on crafting the job description for an itinerant teacher of students with deafblindness. What made this interesting was that the state of Texas did not have state certification for a teacher of students with deafblindness. (At the time of this writing, July 2016, this is still true.) In essence, both the district and the program not only had to accommodate

current certification regulations, but they also had to plan for the possibility of future state certification in this area. Through a collaborative effort between both the member district's program leadership for auditory and visual impairments and its human resources department along with the Region 4 Education Service Center, a worthy job position description was written.

Once the district found the right candidate, a powerful guiding coalition was formed: the Region 4 RDSPD Sensory Team. The team consisted of the itinerant teacher of students with deafblindness (whose certification was as a teacher of students with visual impairments), a teacher of the deaf, and a certified orientation and mobility specialist. While the journey of transforming educational opportunities for students with deafblindness began with overconfidence because it "provided the courage to begin," as Dan Rockwell says, "leadership is sustained by confidence in others" (Rockwell, 2016). The team needed to feel confident to do the work they needed to do. To build such confidence, the team received ongoing assistance from various education specialists from Region 4 Education Service Center. Team members were provided the opportunity to participate in the Texas Teacher of the Deafblind (ToDB) Pilot Project, a 2-year grant-funded venture in which the team would have the chance to collaborate with and learn from Deafblind

Specialists from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. In addition, the itinerant teacher of the deafblind was accepted into the Dual-Sensory Impairment Certification Program at Texas Tech University. As confidence was building, though, a bigger challenge lay in changing perspectives on how students could be served.

As part of the Texas ToDB Pilot Project, the team was asked to select a focus student for the first year, so at the beginning of the 2015–2016 school year, the team reviewed the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for all 22 students identified by the district in the previous school year as eligible for special education as a student with deafblindness. The review allowed team members to objectively see, for the first time, the patterns of consultative services being provided to all but one of the 22 students. It was during this review that the why snuck its way into critical conversations. The team discussed the identified education needs of the students and began to explore the possibility that more services may be needed in order for the students to be successful. As a result of these discussions, the team chose as its focus student one of the 21 students who were not currently receiving direct services.

Though creating the vision naturally began with the why, it expanded

into value priorities as the year progressed. The more the team had the opportunity to work with campus- and district-level staff and administration, the more shared-value priorities became evident. Over time, these value priorities became defined as 1) equal access to educational opportunities, 2) teaching the whole child, and 3) general education first, special education second. The team communicated these messages in all of their interactions with others, and by the end of year one, they had begun to brainstorm how to make the vision more apparent by hosting beginning-of-the-year professional development sessions for campus teams, families, and students.

In order to support these new value priorities, the district and the program had to alter certain systems and structures in order for the sensory team to be successful. IEP meetings and their associated paperwork had to be rethought, namely in regard to required attendance at meetings, documentation of the schedule of services, and signature pages. In considering assessment for students, time needed to be established for collaboration both in conducting the assessment and preparing the results. This meant significantly reducing the sensory team's caseloads so that team members could service the same students. In addition, a system was necessary for objectively determining the need for a skilled one-to-one aide

(i.e., intervener) or low-vision interpreter. Overall, adding the position of an itinerant teacher of students with deafblindness impacted several different areas of the program.

### **Conclusion**

At the end of year one, there were some very significant short-term wins. The program saw a 40% increase in the number of students with deafblindness receiving services from the Region 4 RDSPD. It was able to secure two skilled one-to-one aides for two academic students with deafblindness. The sensory team was chosen by the Texas Deafblind Project to pilot the Informal Functional Hearing Evaluation (IFHE), and team members have been asked to speak at the 2017 Texas Deafblind Symposium. And while those successes are worthwhile, nothing has been more fulfilling than listening to encouragement and praise from the students' parents. On a recent family questionnaire regarding the program's services for students with deafblindness, one parent wrote the following:

I have been very pleased with the changes implemented this year by the new Deaf-Blind sensory team approach. I feel that the three individuals on the team do a very good job collaborating, communicating, and strategizing with each other about how best to

work with my child, and they all bring their own unique skills and background to the table. I feel that my child has made noticeable progress with them this year, which she had not previously made in prior years when her then teacher for the visually impaired, teacher for the hearing impaired, and orientation and mobility specialist operated more independently of each other. Those individuals also didn't have a significant amount of deaf-blind training or experience . . . [The Sensory Team] has shown me that they really care about my child on a personal level. (Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, 2015)

As the Region 4 RDSPD plans for next year, there is even more work to do. Determining how to expand services is the current challenge the program faces. Some additional problem-based opportunities the program is currently considering include

- Ensuring that campus and district staff understand how a student qualifies as a student with deafblindness in the state of Texas;
- Defining how the sensory team is involved in initial evaluations and reevaluations;
- Forming methodologies for determining service time, placement, assistive technology, and accommodation recommendations for

students with deafblindness;

- Providing professional development for the sensory team on effective coaching practices;
- Creating operating guidelines for the sensory team to further secure the team's roots in both the district and the RDSPD; and
- Assisting neighboring school districts and RDSPDs in the development of their own sensory teams.

While this article may appear to oversimplify the process that we used to begin the transformation of educational programming for students with deafblindness, Kotter's eight-step model for change is hardly simple. Throughout the year, those involved in this process achieved a certain comfort level residing in an ever-expanding gray area where questions and problems continually appeared and definitive answers and solutions were in short supply. Surprisingly, no one appears to mind. "Leaps of greatness," says Simon Sinek (2014), "require the combined problem-solving ability of people who trust each other" (p. 70). With a collaborative focus on the why, we will get the job done.

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primary role is enabling the child to 'read the world.'*

Rosenketter, 2004

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### Author Note

Marina McCormick, Region 4 Education Service Center.

The Region 4 Regional Day School Program for the Deaf is a state- and federally funded program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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**Book Review:**  
***Reading Connections: Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments***

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***Reading Connections: Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments***

by Cheryl Kamei-Hannan and Leila Ansari Ricci, AFB Press, 2015, 343 pp., ISBN 978-0-89128-634-9

The role of the teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) in literacy instruction, specifically the teaching of reading, has been a source of debate for many years (see Blankenship, 2008 and Holbrook, 2008). In *Reading Connections*, Drs. Kamei-Hannan and Ricci express their belief that TVIs are, and should be, teaching reading. They also acknowledge that many TVIs are not prepared for this role.

Chapters 1-4 are meant to address this lack of preparation by providing the background for teaching reading. The authors summarize the components of reading, the possible impact of visual impairments on reading, and provide information and tools for TVIs to understand and evaluate general education reading instruction. The remaining chapters, 5-10, each focus on a different component of reading and provide lists of activities to

teach each component in engaging ways. These chapters also include case studies to illustrate how the tools introduced in Chapter 3 and 4 can be applied during instructional planning for each component of reading.

My personal belief is that the primary responsibility of a TVI is to teach the ECC. However, it is impossible to teach the ECC without incorporating reading and writing. But there is a big distinction between *using* reading in a lesson and *teaching* reading in a lesson. I think the information provided in Chapters 1-4 is helpful background for TVIs to have. The “Evaluation of Current Reading Instruction Form” and the “Instructional Planning Tool”, introduced in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively, are extremely valuable and will certainly be required reading for my pre-service TVIs. The importance of these tools is that they highlight the collaboration between the TVI and the general educator to provide literacy instruction to students with visual impairments. The evaluation form helps define the responsibilities of each professional regarding reading instruction, and the planning tool can then be used by the TVI to link their responsibilities for reading instruction to the ECC.

Chapters 5-10 are filled with excellent activities and the Kamei-Hannan and Ricci Reading Assessment is a very thorough assessment. But ultimately your feelings about Chapter 5-10 of *Reading Connections* may come down to

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The Open Hands, Open Access Intervener Modules are a national resource designed to increase awareness, knowledge and skills related to intervention for students who are deaf-blind within educational settings.

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how you answer this question: Whose job is it to teach reading to students with visual impairments? (Holbrook, 2008).

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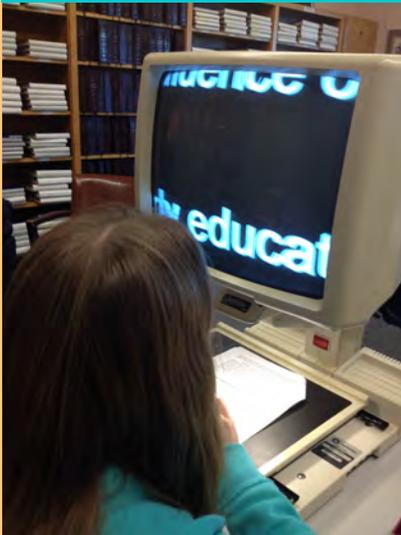
# The Tennessee School for the Blind

615-231-7300, <https://www.tsb.tigers.org/>



Image 1: Front of the Tennessee School for the Blind that was built in the 1950s.

The Tennessee School for the Blind sits on 86 rolling acres, just a few miles east of downtown Nashville. The current campus includes a two-story academic wing (built in 1952), a life skills wing (built in 1992), connecting gymnasium and pool building, 10 cottages for residential students, a track, and a large playground with special equipment for visually impaired and children with multiple disabilities. Approximately half of TSB's students are bused in from all parts of the state, living in the cottages from Sunday afternoon until Friday at noon when they return home. Local students ride school buses from the Nashville Metro area and surrounding counties on a daily basis. At the close of the 2015-2016 school year, 135 students were enrolled.



## Technology at TSB

TSB has come a long way from its humble beginnings. James Champlin, blind from birth, was inspired to launch a small private school for the blind in Nashville in 1844. His service to the visually impaired was so successful that the Tennessee Legislature voted to underwrite the establishment of a "state" school for the blind.

In the 1860s, the school struggled to maintain its existence through two deadly influenza epidemics and the ravages of the Civil War. During the latter, the school was appropriated by the northern army as a military hospital. Victorious Federal troops later destroyed it by fire. During the Reconstruction Years, 1865-1877, students reconvened in Nashville homes and rented facilities until a wealthy philanthropist donated a large mansion to house the school. The institution flourished at this location for some 80 years.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, students received some academic training, but the majority of their day was spent in musical and vocational training, including broom and mattress making, chair caning, rug

**Image 3: Drawing of the original Tennessee School for the Blind Building (mansion).**





Image 4: TSB Bell Tower – the bell was on the original mansion the school moved to in the 1800s. At every graduation the bell is rung once for each graduate before they process out of the auditorium.

weaving, and piano tuning and repair. Such programs were developed across the nation, designed so that the nation's blind citizens could become self-sustaining.

Prior to WWII, TSB had grown to 200 students. Extracurricular activities and programs began to flourish in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including student plays and recitals, and Boys and Girl Scout Troops. TSB participated in competitions in the National Athletic Association of Schools for the Blind for the first time in 1927.

By 1923 the number of academic courses being offered had significantly increased and were assigned credit value. More students were going to college. Finding employment grew with the advent of a braille shorthand machine; graduates with typing skills were finding good jobs. The

school week was shortened from 6-days to the traditional five in 1929.

A new facility for the school was built in 1952, with a wing added in 1993 to provide special classrooms for life skills students. Residential students were moved out of dormitories into cottages in 1993 as well. The more home-like accommodations, including a kitchen, family room, and private bath per two person room, were welcomed by the students, and are still in use today.

The Donelson/Nashville community generously supports the Tennessee School for the Blind. In 1997, Ralph Brewer, alumnus and former teacher and superintendent, created the Friends of TSB, a 501 (c) 3 organization that made its mission to provide enriching programs and equipment to enhance the educational and social development of TSB students. Friends has garnered hundreds of thousands of dollars which have benefited the school with field trips, technologically, a bowling alley, bicycles, and a music therapy resonating floor. The Friends has sent several students each year to NASA's Space Camp and Academy in Huntsville, Alabama, and provided funds annually for senior class members to enjoy a December ski trip to Colorado.



Image 5: TSB Forensic Team & Image 6: TSB Jazz Band

Almost every student at TSB becomes actively engaged in competitive sports including swimming, goal ball, wrestling, cheerleading, and track. This year, TSB took six out of 11 first place trophies in the NCASB. TSB was proud of senior Tim Tanner, who participated as a member of the United States World Team in the Doha Qatar Paralympics in 2015.

TSB sponsors an active Forensics team, and participates in Braille and Academic Challenges. Art class students frequently offer their works at auctions, and student Elle Tuetken's painting of a cat was highlighted in the 2015 APH calendar. For several years, art classes have made Christmas ornaments that adorned the National Christmas Tree in Washington DC.

The school boasts a large sunny library including Braille, electronic and large print books and periodicals, numerous computers, I-pads. The library continues to adopt new and emerging technologies, including interactive projectors and oversized tablet computers.



**Image 7:**

**Students painting ornaments for the national Christmas tree in Washington, D.C.**



Image 8: TSB Cheerleading Team.

TSB continues to grow and change with the times, holding true to its mission: to provide free, appropriate, and individualized educational services to eligible students in a safe environment that will promote independence and a positive self-image, as well as provide information and technical assistance to families, schools, and agencies serving all Tennessee children who are visually challenged.” TSB continues its proud heritage of developing students who are “contributing, participating members of society.”



Image 9: TSB Athlete.

Education for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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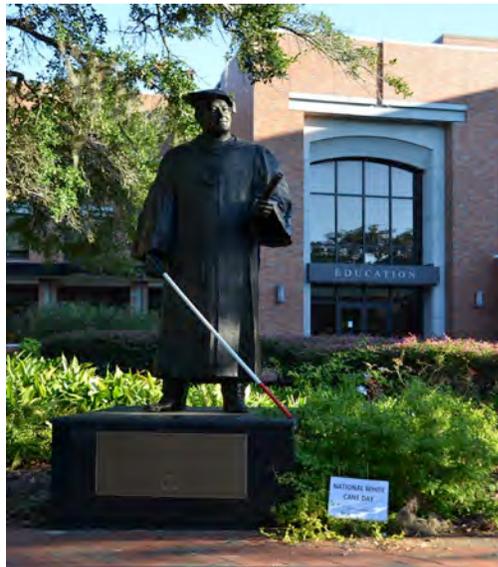
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## Florida State University's Visual Disabilities Program Preparing Tomorrow's Professional Leaders

Sarah E. Ivy, Ph.D., Florida State University, Assistant Professor,  
[sivy@fsu.edu](mailto:sivy@fsu.edu), and

Sandra Lewis, Ed.D., Florida State University, Professor and  
Coordinator of the Visual Disabilities Program



Florida State University (FSU) prepares the largest number of TVIs in the Southeast region of the United States—upward to 25 new professionals in any given year. We offer the only TVI and O&M program in the state of Florida. Since its inception 53 years ago in 1963, FSU's vision program has graduated hundreds of professionals. In the 30-year period between 1986 and 2016, 700 TVIs, O&M specialists, and Vision Rehabilitation Specialists completed their degrees; most of these individuals are still providing services to people with visual impairments across the country.

During the program's first 30 years, a strong foundation was established through the leadership of Dr. Gideon Jones, a TVI who was recruited in 1963 from a resource room in Miami to prepare new TVIs at the undergraduate level. After only a couple of years, in what was seen as a radical move, Dr. Jones convinced the university to start an undergraduate O&M program and soon Purvis Ponder joined him. Of the two, Dr. Jones was the organization man, the one who handled the paperwork and attended to the details of running a program. He wasn't much of a researcher, and recognizing that weakness in the program, he brought Dr. Pearl Tait on board to strengthen the education students received. The three of these professionals, all very different, contributed to building what has come to be known as a solid personnel preparation program.

When Dr. Sandy Lewis replaced Dr. Jones in 1993, she already had established herself as committed to meeting the disability-specific needs of students with visual impairments (now known as the Expanded Core Curriculum; ECC). FSU's curriculum in place at the time, which was identical to the curriculum offered when she attended San Francisco State University in the early 1980s, consisted of the following five courses: Introduction to Visual Impairment, Introduction to O&M, Literary Braille, Anatomy and

Functions of the Eye, and Methods of Teaching Students with Visual impairments. As someone who had worked with the diversity of students with visual impairment and their families in a variety of placements, Dr. Lewis recognized that the many competencies and skills expected of TVIs could not be addressed within this small survey of classes. In little time, she expanded the program to include an additional 10 courses, using the ECC as the framework for the curriculum. As such, most areas of the ECC have a specific class in which theory, assessment, and instructional strategies are addressed.



Image 2: Mangold Lesson.

Mickey Damelio was hired in 2009 and remains as the current coordinator of the Orientation and Mobility specialization. Mr. Damelio shares his passion and knowledge of O&M around the world – bringing a month-long summer training program to such countries as India, Jamaica, and Vietnam through his non-profit initiative. FSU students benefit from Mr. Damelio’s stories of international insight, and some students have volunteered to participate in these experiences. Additionally, Mr. Damelio teaches a signature course open to all FSU undergraduates called the “Blindness Experience”—which is currently the second most popular class among FSU undergraduates! In this way, our program serves to increase the visibility and understanding of persons with visual impairment and recruit leaders to work in the visual disabilities field.



Image 3: Mr. Damelio and students.

Dr. Sarah Ivy, a recent Ph.D. graduate from Vanderbilt University, joined the faculty in 2014. Her interest in intervention research and in preparing students to better serve individuals whose multiple disabilities include visual impairment have further strengthened the program. Presently, Dr. Ivy has multiple research projects in process, which provide some students with opportunities to participate in conducting research. With the diversity of experience and expertise among this faculty, we believe students in the FSU program are among the most prepared and knowledgeable to serve students no matter the setting, age, or ability level! We are passionate about preparing teachers to be leaders!

FSU's Visual Disabilities program is undergoing another transformation at the current time. Instead of having separate degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, a combined junior-senior-master's degree program will be offered. This junior-senior-master's program allows us to shepherd young undergraduate students into this rewarding field, provide comprehensive personnel preparation, and graduate students with a bachelor's and master's degree in visual disability education, which leads to eligibility for certification as a teacher of students with visual impairment, as well as an optional certification in orientation and mobility. Students who

graduate from this program will have completed three years of immersion in the field and will be ready to provide the full range of services needed by their students and clients.

We take great pride in the comprehensive and supportive nature of our preparation program. All certification courses are offered in a traditional, face-to-face format at either the home campus in Tallahassee or at a satellite campus in the Tampa area. The program includes stand-alone coursework in anatomy, daily living, social and career development skills, low vision, eye anatomy, multiple disabilities, deafblindness, braille, Nemeth code, teaching reading and writing, caseload management, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology. Keeping up with changing times in the field that serves students with visual impairment, FSU students learn the newly adopted Unified English Braille code. Students learn the latest technology (high-tech and low-tech) to access literacy in digital and print formats, for wayfinding and object detection, and producing accessible text and images. Another unique feature of the FSU program is the requirement that students complete, at three different time points, a week-long practicum with professionals providing services to students with visual impairments. Referred to as the “Intensives Experience,” students spend a week shadowing a TVI at a residential school,

within a local school district, and at a summer sports camp. In addition, they complete a lengthy practicum experience with students with visual and multiple disabilities, and an internship at one of a variety of direct service settings across the country (or two internships, if they select to also specialize in O&M).

The faculty at FSU tries very hard to create a warm, supportive, “family” atmosphere in which students are inspired to provide excellent services to students who are blind or who have low vision. We focus on making sure that our students have the skills to support the diversity of students whom they will be assigned when working in the country’s local schools and that uppermost in their minds is facilitating the growth to optimum independence for all of their students, which usually involves providing instruction in sensory functioning, social skills, career education, O&M, independent living, recreation and leisure, and assistive technology, as well as the compensatory skills that students need to access instruction in the general or special education classrooms in which they might be placed. FSU students complete their coursework in cohorts, all faculty offices are located in a suite with tables set up for group work, and students maintain a very active student chapter of Florida Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and

Visually Impaired. The effect this creates is an atmosphere of excitement for our work and recognition that we are a community of learners.

Currently, we are stewards of two federal grants to prepare TVIs and O&M specialists, which afford many of our students and prospective students subsidized tuition and a stipend for living expenses. In addition, the program is the recipient of a state grant through which students with visual impairments in Florida are provided comprehensive low vision services and their TVIs are provided technical assistance that supports the efficient use of print by these students.

Our graduates have been recruited from around the country (and the world!). For example, FSU students who have graduated within the last two years are providing direct services in schools and agencies to students in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, Arizona, Alabama, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Virginia, Colorado, New York, Pennsylvania, New York, South Carolina, Maryland, and in India. Not surprisingly, our FSU graduates are routinely recognized for their leadership in, enthusiasm for, and dedication to improving the lives of students and adults with visual impairment.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Your Member Information			
Member ID:		Chapter Name/# (if known):	
Prefix	First Name:	Last Name:	Suffi
Home Phone:		Work Phone:	
Email Address (required for delivery of certain member benefits)			

### Preferred Mailing Address

School/University/Organization Name (if applicable):		
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Country:		

Your Membership Options		
Member Type	Member	Student**
Premier (please select your included division on the back)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$205	<input type="checkbox"/> \$164
Full	<input type="checkbox"/> \$115	<input type="checkbox"/> \$92
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**International Developing Countries**—Individuals residing in developing countries, as identified by the World Bank Model, may join CEC at the Full Membership for \$50. Your mailing address must be in a developing country. Otherwise, you will be charged the regular Member rate of \$115. Visit [www.cec.sped.org/developingcountries](http://www.cec.sped.org/developingcountries) for a current list.

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Premier members should indicate in the "Premier" column the one division you would like included with your Premier membership. If you would like to add additional divisions, please select those in the "Member" column.

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\*\*Additional charge for CASE and DEC division. Premier membership includes one division (up to \$35).

\*\*\*Outside of U.S. and Canada.

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CEC dues from reverse side: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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Annual membership dues in CEC include \$24 for subscription to *Exceptional Children* and \$36 for *TEACHING Exceptional Children*. This information is given in order to meet postal regulations. Please do not use as a basis for payment.

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