



SenseAbilities

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION ABOUT VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AND DEAFBLINDNESS FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS

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Dr. Phil Hatlen has retired from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired after 17 years as superintendent, and a long career of leadership in the education of students with visual impairments and blindness. Read his thoughts about his "transition" in News & Views.

Formerly *SEE/HEAR* — A collaborative effort of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and DARS Division for Blind Services

Tania Khan: A World of Deafblindness

By Sara Khan, Sibling, age 10, Grade 4

Abstract: Many within the deafblindness community in Texas have had the pleasure of hearing Fareed and Rubina Khan at events such as the Texas Symposium on Deafblindness, describing their personal experiences with their daughter Tania. Now Tania's sister Sara shares her perspective of growing up with a sibling who is deafblind.

Keywords: Family wisdom, deafblind, sibling perspective, disability awareness

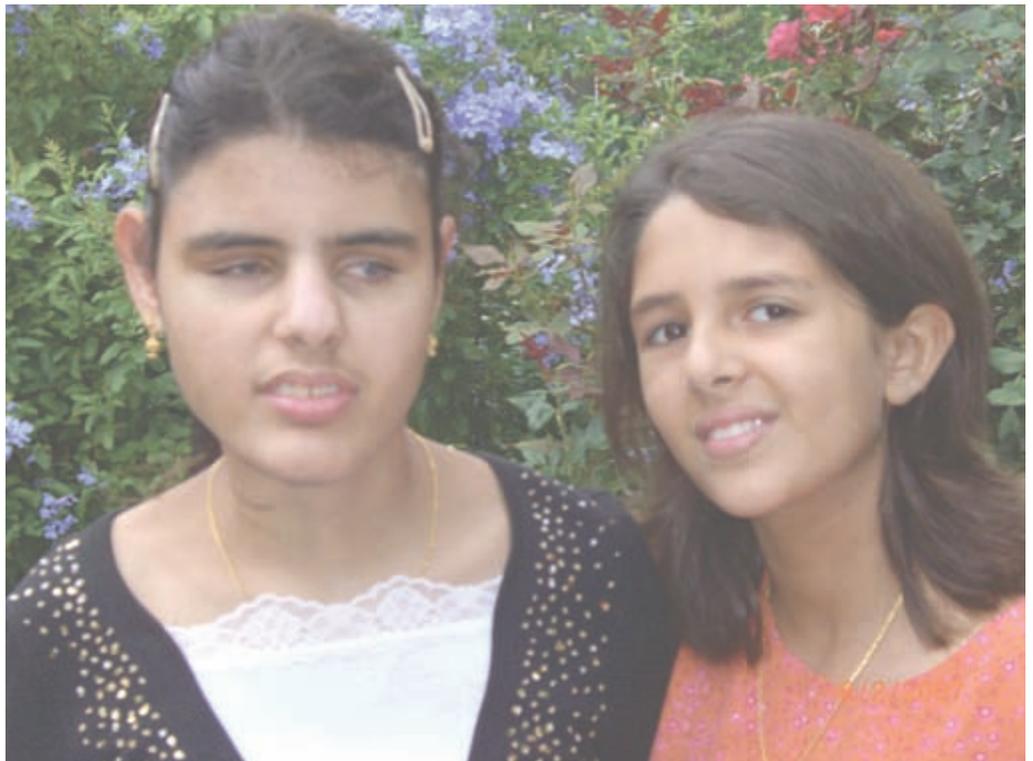
On October 16, 1993 my sister, Tania Fareed Khan was born. She was premature, meaning that she was born four months early. Being born at six months and weighing less than two pounds, her body was not ready for this world. She spent her first eleven months in hospital. That's where the story begins... Imagine that!

Tania had many surgeries during the first few months of her life. She was always very sick and needed a lot of medications that damaged her hearing. No! She was not born deaf. No! She was not born blind, and No! It was not anyone's fault. Tania's eyes did not have a chance to develop properly and the oxygen that she needed to survive damaged her eyes further.

When my sister left the hospital, she could not see nor hear. Tania was not able to eat or drink with her mouth. She used a G-button. A G-button is a tube that connects to your stomach. Food is sent to your stomach through this tube. She needed a G-button for quite a few years. When she no longer needed it, she had surgery to remove the G-button and close her abdomen.

Tania did not walk till she was about three years old and needed someone's support to move about. Often people did not understand that she was deafblind. They thought that she was mentally retarded, which she was not. People thought this because she did not act as you and I would. She acted normal for herself. Normal for her is not what we call normal.

She started school when she was three. It took a long time for her teachers to understand her and her ways of doing things. The teachers, my family, and I were learning sign language. Before sign language, Tania had no other language or way to



communicate. It was like guess and check without the check!

She could not talk because she was deaf. We learn by hearing people speak but she cannot hear, therefore she depends on us to teach her. Also, because she is blind we have to sign under her hands. This is called tactile and coactive signing. Being deaf-blind, she can learn only what we teach her and what we show her with her hands. Her hands have to be her eyes and her ears and we have to bring the world to her hands.

When she was five, Andi, her intervener or caretaker, came to work with her. She was and still is great with Tania. She does nearly everything with my sister and acts as her eyes and ears. Andi has been with us for nearly eight years. Wow! We all hope that Andi will stick with us for however long we need her. That may be a while.

My sister had therapists for nearly everything. There were therapists for teaching her to walk, speak, dress, eat, sign etc. We hope that Tania will one day speak but then and even now we focus on sign language. If she never learns to speak then sign language would be her only language or way of communication. Think about not being able to communicate. Wouldn't that be horrible?

Tania Khan is an amazing friend, sister, and daughter. Though she is not Helen Keller, she is just as smart and fun. Nobody can really describe her world. At the time that she was in hospital, the doctor had told my dad that she was not going to make it. Look at her now! She is a nice, smart, and beautiful thirteen-year-old girl. That just goes to show you: don't ever let anyone tell you that something isn't possible...

Tania Khan, My Sister

By Sara Khan

*I know a girl not far from me
In fact, right across the hall;
Though she is deaf and cannot hear
She receives every hummingbird's call.*

*She is blind and cannot see
Yet, she knows nearly everything:
Everywhere, everyone, every fly, every hum
She knows a lot, yet cannot speak, she holds it all, and then retreats.*

*I know a girl not far from me
In fact, right across the hall;
She uses her hands to communicate
And seems to find it not hard at all.*

*This girl I know not far from me, just happens to be my sister
People find it hard to believe, and the thought of it makes them quiver
I laugh and smile all the while, yet, I mind that people stare
She is a human being. Like all of us.
Yes, that girl, who is quite near.*

Tough Love

By Kevin Hutchins, Transition Counselor,
DARS—Division for Blind Services (DBS), Lubbock, TX

Abstract: Learn how one family created a life filled with enjoyment, productivity, and responsibility for their son who is deafblind, as the owner of his own successful business.

Keywords: Family, deafblind, customized employment, evidence-based practice, self-determination, family wisdom

We have all heard stories of parents who have had children go astray or get into trouble, and the parents were strong enough to administer a little tough love so the children would learn from their mistakes and be responsible for the consequences of their own behavior. This is a story of tough love, with a twist.

The child is not a trouble maker or a delinquent. He has never abused drugs or alcohol, and has never been in trouble with the law. Instead, he is a young man who was born deafblind and developmentally delayed. This is a story of two parents who wanted to make sure their child grew up to be productive and responsible, with the support structures set in place to allow him to succeed.

Keith and Leslie Fansler, Preston's parents, have always been determined to protect their child. When he was a baby, Preston's mother would walk behind him with her sheltering arms to make sure he didn't bump into anything or bruise himself. Preston became a consumer of the Blind Children's Program (the Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program or BCVDDP with the DARS—Division for Blind Services) shortly after his birth. Both of his parents became very involved in activities through BCVDDP and participated in interactive events such as the annual Family Conference in Lubbock and the Deafblind Symposium sponsored by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The family also networked with other parents of multi-disabled children, and they became

active in the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT).

Through perseverance and networking, Preston's parents decided that with the right support systems in place their child was capable of being successful, and they proceeded to become very involved in his ARD/IEP meetings. Leslie realized that Preston would never be able to perform academically at the same level as peers his own age, but she wanted to ensure that he would have the skills he needed to be productive in some way, and the ability to stay busy after he graduated from high school and entered adulthood. Over the years, Preston's parents have made sure his ARD/IEP meetings stayed focused on the long-term skills and the supports he will need after leaving high school.

Preston is now 19 years old. He is still in high school and will continue in school until age 21. He communicates through tactile sign. He uses a white cane to travel, and he helps mow the lawn. An elderly neighbor once told his parents they shouldn't make that poor boy do so much. A few years later, after watching Preston help mow the yard, the same neighbor commented, "Our Preston has sure come a long way, hasn't he?"

Preston is an excellent swimmer, and he like to ride horses. His cousins have even taught him to ride a four wheeler. (Mom was spirited away into the tent at the camp site first, which eased having to deal with her fears.) Most amazing of all, Preston is now a self-employed business owner!

Keith and Leslie, along with networks of support, have worked diligently to establish a small business for Preston. Through vocational training at school, Preston found that he loved to shred paper. He will shred for up to 60 minutes without prompts. Thus was born Handy Able Hands, a document shredding business, and the slogan, "You create confidential data, I destroy it confidentially."

As he grew older and acquired improved independent living and work skills, Preston progressed from the Blind Children's Program to the Division for Blind Services Transition Program. His Transition Counselor was able to arrange the purchase of two industrial-sized paper shredders to get his business go-



ing, and business is booming. He now has three weekly customers and two customers who call him when they need shredding. (All of his customers are doctors' offices, so you can imagine the volume of shredding they have!) He is proud of being a "full service" business, either shredding on-site or transporting the documents home to be destroyed—whatever the customer prefers. He has business cards and employer references. Preston accepts payment by the job, or he'll negotiate a monthly salary. He sends out monthly statements and receives monthly paychecks. The family is even looking at ways to expand the business!

It is amazing what can be accomplished when you apply a little tough love, have the necessary supports, and are motivated to succeed!



Disability Awareness Pays Off Not Only for a Young Lady, but Also for a Community!

By Brian Jones, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Klein ISD, Houston, TX

Abstract: An Orientation and Mobility Specialist shares his experience in watching his neighbor transform from a student who had to do a school project to a young lady who wanted to share information on deafblindness with others around her.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, deafblind, disability awareness, student achievement

Opportunities to learn present themselves in the funniest of places. I live in the Humble ISD region, and teach Orientation & Mobility skills to students with visual impairments in the Klein ISD region. My next-door neighbor, Abby Richey, is the type of child who is curious about learning new things. She loves to watch an adult engage in an activity, and asks a question

every second until she understands the whole process. I have enjoyed seeing her get along with her siblings, reading the best books possible, and teaching her to ride her bike. She is noticeably an active learner.

In March, Abby approached me and indicated that in her second grade class, they had divided into teams to do research on

individuals who have made an impact on society. She asked if I knew anything about Helen Keller.

I began a conversation with Abby about societies' views during Helen's life, her method of communication, the way she accessed information, and how Ann Sullivan worked with Helen to teach her vital concepts. Through our conversation, Abby began to understand just how remarkable Helen Keller really was. Abby began asking questions such as, "Where do I get Braille?" and "How do I learn Sign Language?" I provided resources for her to research the life of Helen Keller and then tools for her to show her classmates including Braille, Abacus, and Sign Language Charts. Her excitement and joy were hard to contain!

For over a month, I saw Abby transform from a student who had to do a school project to a young lady who wanted to share the information on deafblindness with others around her. I saw a deeper sense of compassion and understanding for those who have disabilities.

Abby Richey's research on Helen Keller won first place in the Humble School District's Documentary/Newscast Division for Humble ISD's Technology Award. On May 12, 2007, Abby received an achievement award for her hard work from Dr. Guy Sconzo, Superintendent for Humble ISD, and also had the opportunity to show others her project and increase their knowledge on the issues of deafblindness. Way to go Abby!!!!

Who's Driving the Bus?

Jeanine Pinner, Training & Outreach Coordinator, TxP2P

Reprinted with permission from Texas Parent to Parent Winter 2007 Newsletter.

To learn more about Texas Parent to Parent, visit their website at <www.txp2p.org/>.

Abstract: The author shares strategies parents can use to help their child have opportunities throughout their childhood to become self-determined adults, capable of driving their own bus.

Keywords: Family, self-determination, parenting skills, family wisdom, evidenced based practice

Picture your child's life as a "bus." Who's driving? Is it you or your child? Where is the bus going? Who chose the route, the destination, the speed? Who are the passengers? What about side trips along the way? (You know that side trips often enrich the journey!)

Of course, you realize that my "bus" scenario is really just a metaphor for self-determination, right?

When Jake was much younger, his father and I "drove the bus" for him, but for several years, we've taken on different roles as Jake's ability to drive his own bus has

grown. In earlier years, because of his age and issues arising from his disability, we made decisions for Jake without consulting him. We did this with his best interests at heart, and with the hope (and intent) that he would be able to take over the decision-making process in his own behalf. Our vision of success is of Jake driving his own bus.

As parents of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other health care needs, we find ourselves in the position of having to make decisions and plans for a child who may not be able to completely comprehend what's going on at the time or communi-

cate their needs or desires. While they're in school and until they reach age 18, we're seen as our child's legal representative, and we're empowered with the awesome responsibility of making decisions about their school plan and their involvement in the community. We do this year after year, gathering information and skills along the way. We get used to "driving the bus," and hopefully, we've gotten pretty good at it.

When our children reach age 18, what happens? They've reached "adult" status and are now supposed to "drive" their own buses, right?

Are they ready??? Do they have any experience making their own choices about the direction of their lives?

Here are a few basic scenarios to consider:

1. "Sam's parents have made all of the decisions for Sam until now. Sam recently became 18, and all of a sudden, he has some control over his life and he's loving it. He doesn't have any experience making his own decisions, and is making bad choices. Since he's 18 now, he has control over whether his parents are invited to his ARD, and he has chosen to exclude them . . ."
2. "Jane is 18 now, but relies completely on her mom to tell her what to do. She is a very capable person, but has no experience making her own decisions and lacks confidence in her ability to choose for herself . . ."
3. "Sally is 18 and about to graduate from high school. Her parents are completely supportive of Sally's efforts and desire to take charge of her life and make her own decisions. They started very late in helping Sally learn how to 'drive her [own] bus' and they still need more time...she's not ready to do this on her own!"

How can we help prepare our children to drive their own buses and when should we start? There are many opportunities each day for our children to exercise their choice-making skills; those opportunities exist for every age and level of ability. It may be about food, entertainment, clothing . . . it might be attending or facilitating their own ARD meetings . . . it's an opportunity for a person to have a little bit of control over his or her own little corner of the world. It's also an opportunity to experience the outcomes or consequences of choice-making.

WHAT IF THEY FAIL???

I've always learned more from my failures than from my successes, so I don't see "failure" as a completely negative experience. Don't we owe it to our children to provide them with opportunities to learn how to make responsible choices (and that includes opportunities to "fail" in "safe" environments like home and school)? Shouldn't they have opportunities to express (and act on) their dreams for their future?

When Jake told me he was going to take French as an elective in his freshman year in high school, I said something like, "Don't you think you should take Spanish? We live in Texas and knowing Spanish would be a really good thing." He said, "No, I am taking French." So, I told him (after listening to the little voice in the back of my brain) that it was his choice and we'd see how things were going at the end of the first six weeks grading period. Guess what? He made a "B"! He loves languages and I know that he'll continue on his quest to learn as many languages as possible.

Does this mean that I've backed completely out of the picture and let him do whatever he wants? NO! My role has changed, though, and my support and guidance "look" different than they did a few years ago.

When Jake chooses to sleep until 20 minutes before the school bus arrives, it aggravates me because I don't like rushed mornings. As long as he completes the required morning routine (shower, hair, food, etc.) though, I'm not going to require him to get up earlier. If he pushes it too far and starts to miss the bus, it will become a "teachable moment" and we'll be working together to design a new morning schedule!

Jake is in the "driver's seat" now, and his choice-making skills are pretty impressive! I'm usually right behind the driver's seat carefully watching and trying not to give too many directions and instructions (picture me as "insurance"). Before long, I'll be able to just ride along, perhaps taking a nap or reading a book in the back of the bus. I'll know Jake is on the road to success when he is able to take a trip without us (and doesn't run over anyone or anything!).

Many happy driving experiences to you and yours! Read on for a few more ideas about promoting and supporting self-determination...

"We are all interdependent. No man is an island unto himself. We need each other. When we are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to provide selfless assistance, not only is the other person helped, we are too. We come away changed, feeling good about ourselves and what we have done." (Wilkins, 2000)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

If you're not "driving the bus," does that mean you're out of a job? NO! Use those advocacy skills you worked so hard to develop by becoming a leader in advocacy:

- Work with others to help your child's school and other services provide the best for all children

- Share your experiences and knowledge about your son's or daughter's dreams and needs
- Serve on school or agency committees involved with students
- Become a member of advisory boards or councils dealing with young people's issues
- Testify on educational and youth disability issues before school boards, city, county and state legislative bodies

MORE THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. Do I try too hard to sway my child's decisions?
2. Do I tend to speak for my child instead of letting him speak for himself?
3. Can I separate my own desires from my child's wishes? (PACER, 2002)

HOW YOU CAN NURTURE SELF-DETERMINATION

- Allow your daughter/son to "grow" (take risks, safe experiences) and try out new things
- Recognize that all young people will make mistakes and change their minds before settling on a definite path
- Learn how to assist or let your son or daughter advocate for himself or herself
- Know when to "step back" or when to "step in" without taking over
- Help your son or daughter feel good about himself/herself and to understand his or her disability
- Emphasize what she or he can do -- celebrate accomplishments
- Your own family's religious beliefs and cultural values provide opportunities for learning. (Ca. DOE, 2001)

WHAT'S AT RISK IF WE FAIL TO EQUIP OUR CHILDREN WITH THE SKILLS AND EDUCATION THEY NEED TO FACE THE FUTURE?

- Chronic unemployment and underemployment
- Social and emotional difficulties
- Deprivation of economic self-sufficiency and related benefits (social security, medical retirement)
- Susceptibility to changing economic conditions
- Dependence on public support (Ca. DOE, 2001)

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How to Solve Problems and Protect Parent-School Relationships

By Pam Wright & Pete Wright, Founders of Wrightslaw <www.wrightslaw.com>
Reprinted with permission from Wrightslaw. This article with links to the other articles referenced can be found at <<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/advo.probs.protect.htm>>.

Abstract: Special education experts share their wisdom on how parents and educators can work through problems while protecting their ability to work effectively as a team.

Keywords: Blind, disability, family and school partnership, effective advocacy

Editors Note: Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities. To learn more, visit their website at <www.wrightslaw.com>.

"Our seven-year old child has autism. After his aide told us that he has not received all the speech language and OT services called for in his IEP, we wrote letters demanding that the school make up the missing sessions."

"Now the teacher and special ed supervisor are angry with the aide. They told her that she cannot tell us anything that goes on at school. Doesn't the aide have a right to communicate with us? Is there any law we can refer to?"

PETE & PAM ANSWER

Pete: The issue is not whether or not the aide has a right to communicate with you. The aide is at the bottom of the hierarchy

in terms of power. Is it fair to put her in the position of taking sides with you against her employer? Don't be surprised if she is transferred or fired.

The school is reacting to perceived threats from you by pulling their wagons in a circle. They are preparing to defend themselves. This behavior is not unique to schools—it happens in any organization when there is a perceived threat from the outside.

As a parent, your goal is to make the school want to help your child and your family. You will not succeed by writing demand letters or waving law at school personnel.

Pam: How do you react when another person—someone you do not know well—

makes demands of you? Does this make you rethink your position? If you are like most people, you will defend yourself.

RESTRUCTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL

Pete: Your child is seven years old. You will be negotiating with the school on his behalf for many years. Your relationship with the school is polarized. You need to work on restructuring your relationship with school personnel.

Pam: In our training programs, we tell parents, “Unless you are prepared to remove your child from public school forever, you need to view your relationship with the school as a marriage without the possibility of divorce.”

You need to focus on solving problems while protecting the relationship.

LEARN EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY SKILLS

Pete: I am not recommending that you stop advocating for your child. I am recommending that you learn effective advocacy skills and techniques.

You need to learn to use tactics and strategies—letter-writing, persuasion, and negotiation.

Pam: Begin by reading these articles.

In “Understanding the Playing Field”, advocate Pat Howey discusses trust, expectations, power struggles between parents and schools and how to avoid them, the parental role, and the need to understand different perspectives.

“When Parents & Schools Disagree” – Educational consultant Ruth Heitin describes common areas of disagreement between parents and schools and offers suggestions about how to handle these disagreements.

In “How to Disagree with the School Without Starting WW III”, I answer questions

about how to disagree with the IEP team without starting World War III. Learn about the Rules of Adverse Assumptions, how to use tape recording and thank you letters to clarify issues, and how to deal with an IEP team bully.

USE INFORMATION WHILE PROTECTING YOUR SOURCE

In most cases, parents should treat information from an aide, related services provider or teacher as confidential. Use it but do not attribute it to that person.

If you have questions about services not provided, write a short letter to request information about the number of sessions provided, dates, minutes. You can also ask to see notes of the sessions. If you find that your child did not receive services that were agreed upon in the IEP, write another letter to the effect that services were not provided, and request information about when these services will be made-up. (See “Using Strategies in Your Letters to the School” below.)

If you use this approach, the aide (or other school employee) will not be blamed and can continue to provide you with invaluable “background” information.

USE STRATEGIES IN YOUR LETTERS TO THE SCHOOL

Pete: Read the “Letter to the Stranger”—this article may change the way you view the process and your role forever.

Pam: I can imagine how you felt when you learned that your child hadn’t received the services in his IEP. But before you write more letters, please read “The Art of Writing Letters” about how to write letters to the school. Learn about the Blame Approach and the Storytelling Approach, the sympathy factor, first impressions, pitfalls, and the powerful decision-making Stranger.

When you have concerns about your child's program, it is important that you document these concerns in writing. "12 Rules for Writing Great Letters" includes rules for writing letters and editing tips.

LEARN TO NEGOTIATE & PERSUADE

Pam: As a parent, it's important to understand that you are negotiating with the school for special education services. In "Learning to Negotiate is Part of the Advocacy Process", advocate Brice Palmer describes the negotiation process in special education, explains the rules, and offers excellent advice about tactics and techniques.

Consider attending a Wrightslaw special education advocacy training program - these programs are held around the country.

Pete: I also recommend that you read two books (assuming you have already read our book, *From Emotions to Advocacy!*)

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In by Roger Fisher and William Ury will teach you how to negotiate "win-win" solutions to disputes without damaging your relationship with the school.

How to Argue and Win Every Time by Gerry Spence will teach you how to persuade others to see things as you do, understand your perspective, and WANT to help. *How to Argue* includes great stories about how people dealt with situations similar to yours. Read the story in Chapter 8 about the mother who wanted her county to fix a dangerous road. After you read this story, you will understand what you need to do.

You can get these books from most libraries and bookstores. You can also order them from The Advocacy Bookstore (our online bookstore).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Peter Wright, Esq., and Pamela Darr Wright are the authors of *Wrightslaw: Special Education Law*; *Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy*; and *Wrightslaw: No Child Left Behind*. The Wrights built Wrightslaw.com, Fetaweb.com, and the Yellowpagesforkids.com and publish *The Special Ed Advocate*, the free online newsletter about special education law and advocacy. Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Training Programs are held around the country. To see if a Wrightslaw program is scheduled in your community, look at the schedule on the Wrightslaw Speakers Bureau.

Your Deaf Child Goes To the Hospital Number 1006 Student Health Information Sheet

Developed by: Jan Kemper and Brenda Thaxton
Reprinted with permission from the Gallaudet Clerc Center website,
<<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/SupportServices/series/1006n.html>>.

Abstract: Good communication in the hospital is one of the most important things a parent can do to increase their deaf child's understanding and reduce the isolation and fear. Learn some useful strategies parents can use to prepare a child for a hospital stay.

Keywords: Family, deaf, hospitalization, communication strategies

About one third of all children will need to go to the hospital at least once before they become adults. Although long term or repeated hospitalizations may cause seri-

ous long-term problems, even after a short hospital stay parents may notice such effects as difficulty sleeping, fear of medical treatment or people, increased limit testing and changes in activity levels. Usually these reactions will disappear within a month of the hospitalization, but all of these problems can be minimized by proper preparation and good communication throughout and after the hospital stay.

When planning for a child's hospitalization, or if an emergency hospitalization suddenly occurs, one of the first things every parent should consider is the age of the child. All children are different at each age, and hospitalization will affect each child at each age differently. There is a chart included at the end of this article, which suggests the child's needs and possible responses at each age. Although the deaf child is, of course, going to go through the same developmental stages as a hearing child, he or she is going to have the additional fear, lack of understanding and loss of contact forced by a new and possibly inadequate communication system. Because your deaf child will have a limited ability to understand or be understood through speech, planning for and assisting with good communication in the hospital is one of the most important things a parent can do to increase the child's understanding and reduce the isolation and fear. This should start before the child is admitted to the hospital by communicating with your child and finding out what he or she is thinking. Use play, drawings, books, and brief informal times to explore your child's thoughts and feelings. Give your child correct, honest and simple information. Encourage questions. Contact the hospital and arrange for interpreters for your child while in the hospital. Make hospital sign books (the Kendall School Health Room has Hospital Sign Charts to loan). Be sure to include your child in these arrangements and activities if he or she is old enough. Your child will need to know that he or she will not be alone, that you will be

there, and that he or she can take favorite toys, blankets and books.

Your child will need reassurance that he or she did nothing bad to cause this hospitalization, that he or she will come home from the hospital and that you will always love him or her. A pre-admission tour of the hospital is a big help, particularly if you can actually go on the floor where your child will be. Taking polaroid pictures of hospital staff may give your child a chance to know some faces before he or she is actually hospitalized.

Your child's hospitalization is an ongoing process. Don't stop communicating. Let your child know that "scary" and "hurt" are not the same, and that sharing is good and it will help. Make sure your information is accurate and that you clear up any misunderstandings. While your child is in the hospital, keep things the "same as at home as much as possible" with games from home, school work, and visits from brothers, sisters and friends. This link with the familiar is especially important to your deaf child because, even though he or she may be very clever in devising ways to play with hearing kids in the hospital, communication will still be difficult. You can help the hospital staff to understand your child better by teaching them a few necessary signs, posting these signs in your child's room and encouraging them to adapt their communication to his or her needs.

Tips Include:

1. remind them to mark "Deaf" on your child's intercom button so every staff member will know to come to your child's room when he or she signals; remind them to always get your child's attention with a gentle tap and face the child before signing, speaking or demonstrating something; help them to learn how to insert, turn on, change the battery in and troubleshoot the hear-

ing aid; provide paper and crayons or markers and masking tape for pictures or words of explanation; don't forget that surgical gloves make great signs and finger-spelled alphabets when inflated and taped in place; help them remember that deaf children are very active and communicate through movement which means the least restrictions the better;

2. deaf children's play may be more here and now than hearing children, and they may have more difficulty expressing this "new" experience to an outside person like a nurse. Parents are familiar with child's behavior; you will recognize changes first, and you can interpret these changes to the hospital staff while providing support and stability to your child in this strange and frightening place.

	Needs	What You Can Do
Infancy (0-12 mos.)	Attachment Security Routine	Stay with your child, including "rooming-in" Insist on as few caregivers as possible Help with your child's care Maintain "home" schedule as much as possible
Toddler (12-30 mos.)	Security Routine Independence Impulse Control	Stay with your child Minimize caregivers Maintain routines Involve child in care if possible Encourage age-appropriate activities
Preschooler (30 mos. to 5 yrs.)	Security, Routine Understanding Self-worth	Stay with your child Give accurate, honest information repeatedly in simple ways Hospital tours Reassure child this is not punishment Avoid over protection
School Age (6-12 yrs.)	Maintain self-esteem and competence Maintain positive body image Maintain social self-esteem	Age appropriate activities Involvement in care Preparation and hospital tours Honest communication and information Visits by family and friends, cards/letters
Adolescence (12-18 yrs.)	Maintain trust Maintain independence Maintain social self-esteem Maintain positive body image	Honest, complete communication Age appropriate activities Visits and phone calls, cards/letters Realistic discussion of body/lifestyle changes

Welcome to TAPVI From Your New President

By Shawna Tausch, President, TAPVI

Abstract: The recently-elected president of TAPVI introduces herself and provides information on becoming a member.

Key Words: Family Wisdom, parent organization, TAPVI

Editor's Note: TX SenseAbilities would like to provide a forum for family organizations to regularly get information out to families. This information was provided to us by TAPVI:

On June 18th, the Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (TAPVI) co-hosted the pre-conference at Texas Focus in San Antonio. Marnee Loftin conducted the morning session on evaluating children with visual impairments. In the afternoon, incoming TAPVI president Shawna Tausch presented information on advocacy, communication, and accessing the expanded core curriculum. Both presentations were informative and entertaining.



TAPVI also conducted its annual membership meeting while at Texas Focus. Families were treated to snacks and an evening of socializing before the meeting, during which the new board was elected: President, Shawna Tausch; Past President, Elaine Hinds; President Elect, Michelle Chauvin; Secretary, Alison Rickerl; Treasurer, Alma Granado; Database, Linda Hulett; Webmaster, Dott Smith; Newsletter, Annette Oseguera. Our fund-raising committee chair, Kathy Smith, is in dire need of assistance. If you are interested in helping with fund-raising, or if you want to help out on another committee, please email us <tapvi@yahoo.com>.

I wanted to send a heartfelt "hello" and welcome to our new members and prospective members, as well as a "welcome back" to our old friends. I will be serving as TAPVI president this year. The Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments was established at Texas Focus in 2003. We have struggled to get off of the ground, but I think this is going to be the year that TAPVI takes off. Our volunteers have all worked very hard laying the groundwork to get us to this point. I'm excited to be able to move things forward.

With growth comes change. All TAPVI members will be required to join the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI). NAPVI offers a dual membership opportunity to its affiliates, so \$15 of the \$40 NAPVI dues will be paid to TAPVI. This is a chance to access all that NAPVI has to offer as well as build revenue for TAPVI.

Please complete the NAPVI membership form (see insert), make your check payable to NAPVI, and return it to the TAPVI address at the bottom of the form. We will add you to our database (or mark your membership paid) and forward it to NAPVI. As always, no one will be denied membership for inability to pay, so indicate on your form if you need scholarship assistance. You should receive your welcome packet in the mail within three weeks.

We would also like to develop a parent training and support group for each region. If you are interested in leading or joining one of these groups, please feel free to call me anytime at 512-618-7217.

I am looking forward to a very productive year. With the help of our board of directors and our tireless volunteers, TAPVI is headed for greatness. Thanks to all of you for your support.

Technology Brings Us All Together

By Dawn Adams, Consultant for the Visually Impaired,
Region VIII Education Service Center, Mount Pleasant, TX

Abstract: This article describes the annual Technology Olympics for visually impaired students in Region 8, in northeast Texas. It includes a description of the various technology skills that are tested, as well as how the events are organized and coordinated.

Key Words: Programming, blind, visually impaired, deafblind, technology, Technology Olympics, computer skills, Braille writing

In the spring of each year the Region 8 ESC conference center and computer labs are alive with the sound of students with visual impairments coming to compete in the Annual VI Technology Olympics. All year long students use their assistive technology devices in school and then come to show off their skills. The contest is not so much a competition against each other as it is against oneself. The idea is that students improve their skills from year to year and gain skills in using new assistive devices and software.

Students may compete in two events. They may choose from: PC Access (Levels 1, 2, or 3), Magnifier (Levels 1 and 2), Telescope, Portable CCTV, Braille Notetaker (Levels 1 and 2), Braille Writing (Levels 1-4), Abacus (Levels 1-3), or Scanner Competition. The PC Access event covers a large array of skills. Level 1 is the most basic and requires opening a file in Word, typing text into the document, and saving it. Level 2 involves editing text and such things as inserting pictures or objects. And Level 3 is an ever-changing event for students who are advanced in their computing skills. It also encourages students to become familiar with several programs in the Microsoft package, including Word, Internet Explorer, Excel, and Power Point. In years past students were given a theme such as "My Dream Vacation" and they had to use the internet to research everything they would need to know to plan this vacation. Then they created a Power Point presentation containing all the information – including

pictures and sound clips that were available. This year the Level 3 is requiring students to be able to use spreadsheets in Excel, create charts and graphs of data, and use formulas.

The Magnifier, Telescope, and Portable CCTV competitions require students to use their prescribed low vision devices to access print from various sources. For the Portable CCTV event students must also demonstrate writing using the device. Level 1 of the Magnifier event is for younger students or non-readers and mostly uses pictures instead of words for the test – such as finding specific items in the "I Spy" books. Sources of print for the other events include product labels, CD album covers, menus, phone books, etc.

The Braille Notetaker competition is similar to the PC Access events in that it requires word processing skills using FS Edit or Pocket Word, using the appointment calendar, and saving and retrieving files from a compact flash card or USB device. The skills needed to compete in this event are gradually expanding as the students become more proficient in using various features of Braille notetakers. Since most Braille students in our region use a PAC Mate as their notetaking device, the competition could actually be called the "PAC Mate Contest", but the competition is open to students using other Braille notetakers also.

The other events in the Technology Olympics are self-explanatory as far as the skills

required. The braille writing contests require students to use either uncontracted or contracted Braille, depending on where they are with the acquisition of literary braille and Nemeth Code. They use a Perkins Brailier to take the tests for Braille writing.

There are two other events that are very special. One is the T-Shirt Design contest where students develop a theme for the current year's event and design a graphic for the T-Shirts. As you can guess by the title of this article, last year's theme was "Technology Brings Us All Together." The graphic was a globe with hands around it. This was not a piece of clip art – it was designed solely by a student in Paris, Texas. The Screen Graphics shop in Paris is always happy to do the shirts for us at a discounted price, and they allow us to use two colors of ink. Students are given their shirts when they sign in, and many just slip the shirt on over what they are wearing and wear them throughout the Olympics.

The other special event of our Technology Olympics is the Overall Trophy event. The winner gets a huge trophy with his or her name inscribed on it, and it is displayed in the school's trophy case until the next year. Students competing for this trophy are required to build a Technology Portfolio demonstrating skills in a variety of technology applications including email, internet, etc. New for this year's contest, students must write a paragraph on Cyber Safety and how to be safe online. They must also place in the 1st or 2nd Division in all the events in which they compete and must demonstrate a typing speed of at least 30 words per minute. All students competing in any of the PC events are also given a timed typing test, as we have identified that improvement in this area is a need for academic students throughout the region. Winners from the past two years include students from Hughes Springs ISD and Rivercrest ISD.

We have developed scoring guides for each event and students may place in one of four categories. Students are competing against pre-determined criteria. First Division winners receive a beautiful trophy, Second Division Winners receive a medal, Third Division winners receive a colorful ribbon, and all others receive a participation ribbon. Donations are solicited from local businesses and community organizations and agencies to cover the costs of the awards, t-shirts, and lunch. The judges include VI teachers and technology consultants. Our primary supporters have been Pilgrim's Pride, the Division of Blind Services (DBS) of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), and the Paris Lions Club. Our volunteers make things run smoothly and include parents, school district staff members, and Special Services and Technology Services staff from ESC 8.

Last year's awards banquet was unique and very special! One of our students with multiple disabilities performed a solo to "The Star Spangled Banner." Students and volunteers listened with hands over their hearts – and it was so moving that there was not a dry eye in the room! It was awesome! And what's more – the students created and sang a theme song. The lyrics are:

*"If we all work together, work together
If we all work together how proud we
will be.
For technology has brought us all here
To demonstrate our skills.
If we all work together how proud we
will be!"*

What more is there to say?

Using *Move, Touch, Do!* in the 21st Century

By Wendy Drezek, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, NEISD, San Antonio, TX

Abstract: The author of Move, Touch, Do! discusses some ways to incorporate changes in society and education, as well as experience gained using the curriculum for twenty years, to make the curriculum more useful in the context of current educational practice.

Search words: infant education, infant development, infant curriculum, visually impaired infants, preschool education, preschool curriculum

Move, Touch, Do! (Drezek, 1995) was first compiled thirty years ago and field tested and edited for ten years. It was designed to provide: 1) familiarity with the content, skills and vocabulary of the early childhood, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten curricula; and 2) a cookbook or starting place for new teachers, teachers of the visually impaired who did not have infant background, and infant teachers who did not have a background in visual impairment. It was also designed to progressively teach and incorporate increasingly complex techniques. In the last twenty to thirty years, there have been many changes both in the education of infants and in the field of visual impairment. In addition, I have learned as I have used it, and gradually adapted it in ways that I think make it more useful.

This list is intended to provide some thoughts about ways the basic framework can be useful today.

1. What would I do differently?

- a) *Simplify and reduce materials and activities.* I wrote the original units requiring explicitly highly structured lessons with multiple materials, activities, extensions and "reteaches". I have found over the years that simpler, uncluttered, concrete, and enactive activities with lots to do, feel, and hear repetitively are far more engaging than elaborate lessons with multiple materials.

For instance, when I teach "hat", during Unit Time on the first day we

explore feeling and trying on lots of hats which vary in sensory characteristics. I stress feeling the materials and parts of the hat, and play a kind of "peek-a-boo" game, putting hats on and off. I also emphasize the hat sign and symbols as well as the critical features such as brim, band, and crown. Then in One-to-One Time, one group does hat play and finding a hat, while another group might match and identify a variety of hat pictures.

- b) *Do more art.* As with many of us, I used to belittle art activities as not meaningful for our population. Increasingly we live in a graphical interface environment, and I've learned that a rich art experience is a wonderful introduction and training opportunity for this new interface as well as tactile page training. We do lots of art activities for several reasons. First of all, art is a common activity in school as well as leisure settings and I want my students to feel comfortable with these activities. Secondly, art teaches important page skills which train for both visual and tactile literacy: edge, corner, scanning for and keeping track of information on a page. Third, art is the beginning of interpreting graphical representation.
- c) *Have remarkable conversations that develop from the child's topic and use hand-UNDER-hand to help the*

child safely move towards exploring the content world needed in school as a base for language and thinking by touching, moving and doing. I use Barbara Miles' (Miles & Riggio, 1992), phrase—remarkable conversations—to mean that we must base our facilitation of both social interaction and communication on the child's topics, that is to say, what the child wants to interact and communicate about. This respect for the child's topics not only respects the dignity and integrity of the child, but also, in the long run, is less threatening and more meaningful, encouraging the child to take risks with new experiences. Using Miles' hand-under-hand technique allows the child to approach and control the exploration.

- d) *Work for the ability to generate new language with flexibility and novelty, stressing non-cued language initiated and maintained by the child.* Over the years, I incorporated Ellyn Lucas-Arwood's (1983) "pragmatism" theory, which argues that both our assessment and instruction essentially provide an adult framework for language, rather than developing language which emerges spontaneously to effect the environment. Much of both assessment and instruction still relies on imitation or choice-making, rather than placing children in situations requiring action using their own communication to create a change. For instance, frequently we provide a set of choices to act as requests, essentially providing the language to the children. What we want is to lead children to communicate requests, as in "What do you want?", rather than "Do you want a cookie?"
- e) *Look at new materials—e.g. CVI/FVE mats, Tactile Connections* (Conlin

& Jahnel, 2005), *Setting the Stage* (Poppe, 2004), *Pre-Feeding Skills* (Evans & Klein, 1987). These American Printing House materials <www.aph.org> are examples of the many new programs, materials, and media available for our students. CVI/FVE mats have served as a nice starting place for visual interest and reaching to act on the environment, and assessment of beginning interest on the lightbox. *Tactile Connections* (Conlin & Jahnel, 2005) gives us all a common tactile symbol vocabulary. *Setting the Stage* (Poppe, 2004) provides materials to move from objects through two levels of tactile representation <www.aph.org>. APH and National Braille Press (e.g. Curran, 1994, Keller & Rubin, 2007) also produce a variety of tactile early learning books to introduce emergent braille literacy to children and parents.

- f) *Gentle your discipline* (See *Gentle Discipline* on my website <www.neisd.net/campuses/Northwood/WendyDrezek>. We want to use our own model and "gentling" to create a positive and emotionally secure environment which fosters positive behavior. *Gentling* involves using our actions—low, slow, soft speech and movement—to minimize reactivity and provide a nonverbal message conveying calm, relaxation, and safety.
2. How do we deal with TEKS and accountability? We need to give the children the experiential base of the content that is assumed in the state curriculum.

Traditionally, special education has been skill centered. IEPs and IFSPs list skills. Skills are tools, but many skills lists are lists of benchmarks, which may not be functionally important.

Benchmarks are easily observable items, generally from tests. Unfortunately, this approach neglects both process and content. When we sat isolated in special education classrooms, skills might have made more sense, but now our children are tested on curriculum content. If our children are going to be able to handle grade level content progressively through school, they need to have an experience base of the content as infants.

- a) Matrixteks gives you an overview which correlates the curriculum with TEKS (email <wdreze@neisd.net>, or <www.neisd.net/Campuses/Northwood>).
- b) There are temporary 0-4 TEKS called Starting Blocks [Education Service Center 20 (ESC 20)] which segue into the Pre-kindergarten Guidelines [Texas Education Agency (TEA)].
- c) Literacy is complex, involving book and page and book skills, picture interpretation, narration, rhyme and phonics, recalling details, causal relations and sequences, making multiple statements on multiple topics, and whatever code or symbol system is used (see Move, Touch, Read, <www.tsbvi.edu/Education/move-touch-read.htm>). It also involves the ability to produce and consume text for a variety of purposes. It presupposes social skills such as initiating and maintaining interaction and communication, and physical skills such as locating, opening and finding relevant material in books, as well as tactual training. Braille teachers are reading teachers and need to understand all the prerequisites and curricular relationships of literacy; braille literacy is not just code. Reading is, after all, about language, cognition and social inter-

action. There are excellent materials for evaluating learning media (e.g. Koenig & Holbrook, 1995).

- d) Language is the base of all academics. For example, math is really a narrative. "I have four and I need to remove three; how many are left?" is subtraction. To do any other academics children must be able to identify the reference and topics—language skills.
3. What is the role of technology?
 - a) There are new software and interfaces such as the HATCH computer <www.computersforkids.com> and Intellitacktiles Pre-Braille software for infants and toddlers <www.aph.org>. Programs have more options for differentiation in stimuli characteristics and response mode.
 - b) Work on page skills is more essential than ever in an increasingly graphical interface and visual search world—Intellitools (<http://www.intellitools.com/>), HATCH and Touchwindows (<http://www.broderbund.com/products/364249.jsp>) all provide training for this webpage based interface.
 4. How do we incorporate sensitivity to differences in our diverse society? We are sensitive to issues of gender, ethnicity/race/language, religion, and personal choice as our society becomes more diverse in many ways. Respect for this diversity needs to be infused into the curriculum, with books, music, foods, celebrations, role descriptions and terminology.
 5. What have we learned about cortical visual issues? We are much more aware of the complexity and neuroscience of cortical visual impairment, and the complexity of functional vision in general, and how to assess and remediate in these areas (Langley 1998, Levack,

1994). There are excellent resources available to assist with programming in this area, e.g. Dr. Christine Roman's intervention program (Lueck, 2005), online CVI course <<http://www.aerbvi.org>>, and information <www.aph.org>.

6. What is my current philosophy of infant education for our population? I am more TEKS and future focused, wanting my children to be comfortable in whatever non-adapted environments they may discover. I have come to believe that the starting point for infant intervention must be the emotional comfort of both families and children. At the same time, we want to be able to facilitate change and progress in children—this is always a delicate balancing act. I have also learned to, when in doubt, go simple and safe both in my interaction and in my instructional choices. Most of all, I have learned to respect the slow accretion of change, and not to pine after fast and flashy results!

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MATERIALS FROM AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Swirly Mat Sets, Light Box and Materials Levels 1-3, Let's See: Vision Development Activities Kit, IntelliTactiles Pre-Braille Concepts, On the Way to Literacy: Early Experiences for Visually Impaired Children, Moving Ahead Series, Alphabet Scramble Storybook, Tactile Treasures: Math and Language Concepts for Young Children with Visual Impairments, Rolling Into Place, Lots of Dots.

Natasha and the Big Old Goofy World

Chris Montgomery, TSBVI Outreach, Deafblind Education Consultant

Abstract: A former classroom teacher, now Outreach deafblind consultant, shares the observations and educational intervention strategies he compiled when working with one student a few years ago. Natasha had cortical visual impairment, central auditory processing disorder, seizure disorder, and additional sensory integration problems.

Keywords: visually impaired, cortical visual impairment, central auditory processing disorder, deafblind.

Natasha is a seven-year-old girl who has been labeled deafblind. She has a severe bilateral hearing loss, a cortical visual impairment, and a long history of severe seizure disorder that began at four months of age. To restrict and lateralize her seizures, by age three she needed a corpus callosotomy to separate the anterior two-thirds of the corpus callosum. After surgery Natasha made significant improvements in her general health, sleep, growth, development, midline control, and sustained visual gaze. Her seizures continued, and at age six she received a Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS). The VNS is a device that sends an electric signal to the Vagus nerve at consistent intervals so regular brain waves can be established, thus minimizing seizure activity.

It has been approximately three years since Natasha's neural surgery. Research suggests that the first three to four years of a child's life is the most critical for the development of neural pathways. Early

identification of Natasha's neurological conditions, including CVI provide the best opportunity to take advantage of the brain's plasticity. I feel we are just in time in this regard, and I am noticing improvement in her use of vision weekly.

OBSERVATIONS

In Natasha's case, her CVI had a more profound effect on her vision before her corpus callosotomy. According to her mother her depth perception problems have improved. Her ability to stay on task and recognize people and calendar symbols is also improving. Natasha still exhibits a strong preference for bright primary colors, and usually attends better when her environment is kept visually uncluttered. She does not demonstrate fluctuations in her vision.

Natasha is starting to respond to my voice during familiar activities such as eating breakfast. She will lean her ear toward

my mouth to listen to familiar phrases that I say to her. I try to keep these vocalizations as consistent as possible during the routines so they will in effect be paired with the routine we are doing. I am hoping the next step will be her hearing these vocalizations from a further distance, and associating my vocalizations with the particular activity by signal or gesture when we are away from the activity. Natasha is motivated by her near senses including:

- Vestibular: swinging, being flipped, rocking, swaying, and extreme extension in an inverted position.
- Oral/Tactile: oral exploration, smelling, tasting, textures (e.g. pegboard, carpet, familiar blanket), water, vibration.
- Touch/Proprioceptive: deep pressure, physical "rough house" play, tapping, stomping feet.

CORTICAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a temporary or permanent visual impairment caused by the disturbance of the posterior visual pathways and/or the occipital lobes of the brain. The degree of neurological damage and visual impairment varies with the time of the onset, as well as the location and intensity of the injury. It is a condition in which the visual systems of the brain do not consistently understand or interpret what the eyes see. CVI can have wide-ranging effects. Individuals can have multiple disabilities, and other cognitive disorders, as well as motor impairments that compound their CVI.

The major causes of CVI are asphyxia, developmental brain defects, head injury, hydrocephalus, and infections to the central nervous system, such as meningitis and encephalitis. (Jan & Groenveld, 1993) The damage may be localized to a specific area of the brain or generalized to different cerebral regions. Additionally the severity of the visual impairment is related to both the gestational age at the time of insult and neonatal seizures. Other causes for cortical visual impairment include toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus, and such cerebral degenerative conditions as Tay-Sachs disease, and galactosemia. (Cogan, 1966) Similar injuries to an adult's nervous system may have very different outcomes than those affecting children.

Individuals with CVI may exhibit any of the following characteristics:

- Their visual acuities may range from light perception to print reading ability.
- There is almost always a field deficit present.
- Nystagmus is absent unless there is an additional ocular disorder.
- The eyes show no apparent abnormality.
- A high percentage demonstrate light gazing, even though about the same percentage are light sensitive.
- Visual functioning fluctuates.
- Color perception is generally intact and many students seem to perceive red or yellow more easily.
- Difficulties with depth perception are frequently present, particularly with foreground/background perception.
- Suppressing unnecessary visual information may be difficult. Close viewing may be preferred even though visual acuities are normal.
- Perception of objects is difficult when they are spaced close together.
- Avoiding obstacles during travel is easier than using vision for close work. (Smith & Levack, 1997)

While Natasha uses the distance senses of vision and audition, these senses are less reliable. The information gained through them seems to be more difficult for her to process. Natasha sometimes exhibits signs of auditory overload. She may have a difficult time filtering out environmental noises. Sensitivity reactions observed in the past have included withdrawal, covering her ears, vocalizations indicating stress, and “shut-down” behavior. Extraneous objects in the environment tend to distract her if they are brightly colored or if they have a

desirable texture for touching or mouthing. People walking past or about the room also distract Natasha.

Both at home and at school Natasha associates specific locations with specific actions. She travels to various locations in the classroom to perform these actions, leaving and returning to a given activity repeatedly. Natasha seems to process information by interacting with a person or object for several minutes then withdrawing to a calming activity for several minutes. She

CENTRAL AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDER AND AUDITORY NEUROPATHY

Central auditory processing disorder (CAPD) is a term that refers to some type of problem in the auditory system, which occurs neurologically instead of in the ear itself. A person may have one or more auditory processing problems for a variety of reasons. Differences in auditory nerve (auditory neuropathy) might cause some of these problems, however there is more to the neurology of the auditory system than the auditory nerve.

As the nerve fibers enter the brainstem at the base of the skull they split and cross (similar to the optic nerve at the optic chiasm). Then the fibers go to various parts of the cortex of the brain. Most of the fibers go to the temporal lobe. Differences in neurology, anywhere along the line, might result in the symptoms of CAPD. (Durkel, 2001)

CAPD is similar to CVI in that it results from neurological causes instead of damage to the sensory system itself. Children with cortical visual impairments are at a greater risk of having CAPD, because the damage to their neurological systems which caused the visual impairment may also have caused damage to the auditory system.

CAPD is defined as a disorder with problems in one or more of the following six areas:

- Sound localization and lateralization (knowing where in space a sound is located).
- Auditory discrimination (usually with reference to speech, but the ability to tell one sound is different from another).
- Auditory pattern recognition (musical rhythms are one example of an auditory pattern).
- Temporal aspects of audition (auditory processing relies on making fine discriminations of timing changes in auditory input, especially in differences in the way the input comes through one ear as opposed to the other).
- Auditory performance decrements with competing signals (listening in noise).
- Auditory performance decrements with degraded acoustic signals (listening to sounds that are muffled, missing information or for some reason are unclear, e.g. trying to listen to speech from the other side of a wall. The wall “filters” or blocks out certain parts of speech, but a typical listener can often understand the conversations.).

has recently begun to associate her calming activities with familiar people, and is attaching her calming activities to places or objects in the room with less and less frequency.

Natasha shows significant signs of sensory “disorganization”. It is not easy for her to attach meaning to what she sees, hears, or how her body “feels” within a movement or activity. This means it requires a lot of effort on her part to combine her skills. Natasha’s

sensory processing skills vary throughout the day, and from day to day. There are occasions when it appears she is using her vision to actively explore and search within her environment. There are other situations in which she is less actively attending to her vision, but seems more aware of her own body through movement, sound, or oral/tactile involvement. The appropriate educational strategies and methods are modified according to her responses.

EPILEPSY SURGERY AND CORPUS CALLOSOTOMY

Most seizures can be controlled with medicine. When medications are unable to eliminate seizures, other therapies are considered, including surgery. When a part of the brain can be identified as the source of seizures, surgical removal of that source will often eliminate the seizures all together. Several different types of surgery can be offered. The temporal lobe is the most common part of the brain involved in seizures and these patients undergo lobectomy. Extratemporal lobectomy, hemispherotomy, and corpus callosotomy are also used in patients with seizure sources in different parts of the brain. In patients who are not candidates for brain surgery, the Vagus nerve stimulator can be used to reduce seizure frequency.

The surgical procedure corpus callosotomy is resection of the anterior two thirds of the corpus callosum. In many cases, limiting the resection provides significant seizure reduction and may avoid some of the cognitive complications that may arise from complete corpus callosotomy. Anterior corpus callosotomy is less likely to lead to significant cognitive difficulties, so-called split-brain phenomenon, than larger resections. More extensive corpus callosum resections can disrupt the cross-hemispheric communication of visual information and may lead to more noticeable neuropsychological problems. All divisions

likely cause some deficit and acute, transient problems are common, especially in total resections. Nevertheless, when anterior corpus callosotomy fails to provide significant seizure reduction, some patients may benefit from a secondary procedure to resect the remaining posterior one third of the corpus callosum.

The goal of these procedures is seizure reduction, not cure. Accordingly, reduction in seizures to a certain percentage is used as a measure of success. Overall outcome has been reported as 8% seizure free, 61% improved, and 31% not improved. In children who undergo corpus callosotomy, quality of life measures improved with seizure reduction, even in the absence of seizure-free status. (Beach, 1998)

A Vagus Nerve Stimulator is used with patients who have medically intractable epilepsy, and are not candidates for resective surgery. The stimulator is placed on the left Vagus nerve, in the neck. A battery is placed under the skin in the chest, like a pacemaker. By using the stimulator, a significant reduction in seizure frequency can be achieved. Although complete seizure freedom is unlikely, the effect of the stimulator seems to improve with continued use. Seizure reduction is greater the longer the device is used.

Body position is a strong contributor to functional use of vision. Natasha is able to hold her head steady to scan the environment and make visual contact with adults. However, there are long periods of time in which her head position is constantly changing and the ability for her to combine her vision and midline control is limited. Movements that promote controlled head and neck extension are helpful.

LEARNING IMPLICATIONS

In order to address Natasha's unique learning style, the educational team has adopted the following educational strategies.

- Provide opportunities for a variety of vestibular and tactile stimuli. Allow Natasha to swing for at least 20 minutes prior to a structured activity. This type of vestibular input has great impact on increasing her eye contact and focus on objects and people. Vibration and deep touch are also calming to her nervous system.
- For sensory motor participation and play, Natasha should direct her own movements as much as possible. Sensory motor play is a chance for Natasha to experience comfort within her own body. The caregiver's role should be to establish trust, offer options, and make themselves available for interaction.
- Use the near senses (tactile, oral, vestibular, proprioceptive) to gain Natasha's attention and motivate her to attend to visual and auditory information.
- To promote self-initiation, provide opportunities for Natasha to build a sense of anticipation. The layout and organization of the classroom and calendar systems must be predictable. A quiet uncluttered environment with a limited number of people will help her focus. Combining object symbols, voice, and gesture (e.g. pointing, gestural sign) will

help to direct Natasha's attention. Adding rhythmic sounds and singing while Natasha is engaged in an activity helps her to focus her attention as well.

CONCLUSION

Research indicates that the ear and the eyes neurologically function and develop in much the same way. I feel Natasha still has time to establish neuro-pathways that will facilitate her use of both vision and hearing in meaningful ways. Through the use of consistent activities and communication strategies we are already seeing Natasha make more sense of her world and use her vision and hearing in more functional ways. I feel the future is very bright for Natasha.

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Editors Note: Dr. Phil Hatlen is retiring after 17 years as Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Those of us who worked with him will forever be grateful for the leadership and inspiration he provided. We join together with all people concerned with visual impairments in Texas and around the world in wishing Phil all the best in his future professional and personal endeavors. This will be the last of his regular quarterly columns we have come to look forward to in this publication and its predecessor, SEE/HEAR.

Bill Daugherty, for 15 years the Superintendent of the Kansas School for the Blind, has been named the new Superintendent of TSBVI. Please join us in welcoming Bill back to Texas in this new role. We all look forward to the continued success of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in providing quality services for the benefit of children and their families throughout Texas and beyond.

My Transition

By Phil Hatlen, Superintendent, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: Dr. Phil Hatlen writes his final column upon retiring as Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Key Words: News & Views, Superintendent, retirement, farewell

I'm a native of California, and had never lived anywhere else. But the prospect of working at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired was so attractive that



my family and I moved from San Francisco to Austin in the summer of 1990, and a new and exciting adventure began. I have been an educator of blind and visually impaired students all of my adult life, but until my arrival

in Austin, I had never been Superintendent of a school for the blind, a position I wanted very much before I retired.

I can't begin to describe the next 17 years of my life. I have become acquainted with beautiful and endearing children. I have met amazing parents. And I realized soon after I arrived in Austin that the staff of

TSBVI were (and are) exceptional in their dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm. There are wonderful and passionate professionals in education of the visually impaired all over this state. I have shared a journey with all of you that has been the highlight of my professional life.

I learned a lot of lessons along the way, including:

1. I had a lot to learn about personnel management.
2. I had a lot to learn about financial management.
3. I learned a lot about working with the State Legislature.
4. I learned to get out of the way of creative, imaginative, energetic staff.
5. I continued to learn about how much more parents know about their children than we will ever know.
6. I learned that too many new ideas at once tend to confuse and discourage staff.

7. I learned that I'm fairly good at broad strokes, but that I need help in the details.
8. It was verified to me that there are a lot of people on the TSBVI staff that are smarter and more creative than me.
9. I learned that everyone—nurses, food service workers, teachers, maintenance workers, residential instructors, administrators, etc.—everyone who works at TSBVI is dedicated to the needs of students.
10. I learned that the Superintendent sets a climate for the entire school.

What a time this has been!!

On August 17, 2007, I will retire from TSBVI. A lot of factors went into this decision, and it surely wasn't an easy one to make. While I will be leaving TSBVI, I will not be

leaving my profession. I have several national projects in mind that will occupy my time for many more years. But I also intend to travel more, read more, and sleep late more often.

Thanks to all of you for the richness you have brought to my life for the past 17 years. The following quote from Helen Keller applies to me as well as her:

*When I recollect the
treasure of friendship
that has been bestowed
upon me I withdraw all
charges against life.
If much has been denied me,
much, very much has
been given.
So long as the memory
of certain beloved friends
lives in my heart I shall
say that life is good.*

It Takes a Great Man to Adopt a Great State

By Barbara J. Madrigal, Assistant Commissioner, Division for Blind Services

Abstract: Assistant Commissioner Madrigal provides a retrospective on Dr. Hatlen's career serving children who are blind and visually impaired.

Key Words: Dr. Phil Hatlen, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, blindness, visual impairment, Division for Blind Services

Almost everyone who lives in Texas knows at least one or two people who have moved to our great state from California. We certainly do, and among them is a man we consider to be a very good friend and a strong ally.

Raised and educated in California, Dr. Phil Hatlen has made a powerful and lasting impression on our state. He decided to become a Texan in 1990 -- and how very glad we are that he made that decision! As superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in Aus-

tin, Dr. Hatlen has proven to be a strong and active partner in our efforts to expand and improve quality services to blind Texans.

With Dr. Hatlen's enthusiastic and innovative support, the Division for Blind Services (DBS) and TSBVI were able to successfully partner together to establish a joint program that serves students who have graduated from high school but who still need a little help in learning how to apply their educational skills and daily living skills to real life situations. The Post-Secondary Ed-

ucation Program allows these young adults to live in their own apartment while working to improve the skills they will need to be fully independent adults. In addition to the daily living activities involved in cooking their own meals, cleaning their apartment, and keeping up with the laundry, each of the program participants is responsible for money management tasks such as paying the rent, buying groceries, and balancing a checkbook as well as time management skills such as attending scheduled meetings with their Career Guidance counselor, completing planned activities and/or college-prep coursework, and making decisions about recreational and leisure activities.

Dr. Hatlen has always advocated on behalf of people who are blind, and when the Legislature is in town, you can be sure that he is actively supporting improved educational programs and enhanced rehabilitative services. He has also been instrumental in helping both DBS and TSBVI seize opportunities that opened new avenues of communication with consumer groups and other advocates within the blind community. Over the years, the ensuing discussions and meetings have encouraged the development of mutually cooperative relationships and have ultimately resulted in improved services and higher quality outcomes for many blind Texans.

At the beginning of his distinguished career, Dr. Hatlen worked as one of the first teachers of visually impaired students who were included in regular classrooms. In Texas, he has worked with equal commitment to bring the very best academic curriculum and educational opportunities to TSBVI students. Regardless of the school setting in which the student learns, however, his ultimate goal has always been to achieve a quality education for each and every student. To achieve that goal, he has employed an extensive and diverse array of exceptional talents including preparation, creativity, innovation, and determination.

Blending a passionate interest in quality education with a strong desire to help students be successful seems to come naturally to Dr. Hatlen. He has served on the Council of Schools for the Blind, actively participated in the development of policies that benefit blind and visually impaired persons, and published works on curriculum and education placement for visually impaired students that have earned him recognition at both the state and national levels.

Dr. Hatlen is indeed an extraordinary man. He has a natural ability to share his dreams and optimistic outlook with others that makes him a perfect mentor for both students and professionals. He sees beyond today and envisions the future, and he motivates others to do the same. He also has an innate ability to bring people with diverse perspectives together to create a unified voice that molds and shapes academic, rehabilitative, and social changes for people who are blind.

He was very active in the formation of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) at the national level and, after he was transplanted to Texas, he worked equally hard to help the state chapter known as the Texas AER or TAER. Today, TAER is a strong organization that benefits many professionals in the field of blindness from across our state, including educational and skills-building conferences that improve services to blind and visually impaired Texans of all ages.

TAER also makes annual awards that recognize Texans who have contributed to improved services for people who are blind. Among these prestigious awards, the annual Phil Hatlen award has been established to recognize a Texas administrator or university professor who has demonstrated excellence in leadership and innovative changes in the field of visual impair-

ment. As the nominating form states, the man for whom the award is named is "a visionary of change who has been an inspiration to countless professionals during his career as a teacher, university professor in teacher preparation programs, and in his many leadership roles in national and state organizations and committees."

Dr. Hatlen has dedicated his career to the education of students who are blind. In an interview with the Council for Exceptional Children, he once summarized his career by saying "perhaps the most beautiful form of

creativity is teaching blind students." We wholeheartedly endorse his sentiments, and we know that Dr. Hatlen's choice of careers has been a great asset to teachers and students alike.

Regardless of where he chooses to live or work, Dr. Hatlen's impact on the field of blindness is impressive, and his ongoing enthusiasm and dedication should serve as an inspiration to us all. We are very proud and thankful that he has chosen Texas as his adopted home!

Hadley Course Helps Parents of Children with Multiple Disabilities

Press Release

Abstract: This article describes a new course, "Parenting Children with Multiple Disabilities", that is available from Hadley School for the Blind.

Key Words: blindness, visual impairment, multiple disabilities, Hadley School for the Blind, parenting.

Unique challenges arise when parenting a child with a visual impairment as well as other disabilities, but having a basic outline and strategy could greatly assist a parent's approach to their child's learning needs.

Hadley's new course "Parenting Children with Multiple Disabilities" presents skills and techniques for furthering development in a child with multiple disabilities. This course is available in large print and online. This tuition-free course helps parents to meet their child's special learning needs.

In just seven lessons, this course provides empowering information to help their child learn and develop. Topics include an examination of basic concepts of learning, a description of professionals who may work with their child; communication, social development, and behavior issues; and an exploration of self-help skills and orientation and mobility. The course features examples of three children with different combinations of disabilities to present how

individuals learn various concepts and skills in unique ways.

"Having the right information empowers the parent of a child who has multiple disabilities," said Ginger Irwin, Hadley instructor. "This course will give parents more confidence to take charge of their child's learning and development." This course is tuition free and open to students in Hadley's Family Education Program. To enroll in this course, you can visit us on the Web at <www.hadley.edu> or call 800.526.9909.

Founded in 1920, The Hadley School for the Blind is the single largest, worldwide distance educator of persons who are visually impaired. Hadley offers over 100 tuition-free courses to eligible students. The school's 10,000 annual enrollments are from all corners of the United States and more than 100 countries. Courses are available to students who are visually impaired, family members, and professionals.

Expanding Outreach Programs!

By Cyral Miller, Director of Outreach,
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: Several staff members are joining or changing roles in the TSBVI Outreach Program this year.

Key Words: News & Views, TSBVI, Outreach, new staff, consultants

The TSBVI Outreach Program was very lucky this past year to receive additional funds from the Texas Legislature. These new dollars will allow us to expand in several significant ways in the 2007-2008 school year. In addition to the existing programs to provide statewide assistance to families and programs for students with visual impairments (including those with multiple disabilities) and students with deafblindness, we will have the following new initiatives:

STATEWIDE O&M SPECIALIST – RUTH ANN MARSH

An O&M specialist is one of the primary VI professionals to evaluate and teach children who are visually impaired. The significance of good O&M skills in life long success has been noted by many sources. TSBVI Outreach will now have a brand new position designated to provide statewide O&M consultation. Ruth Ann Marsh, who has been the mentor coordinator for the past 9 years, will now be able to devote her time and considerable passion for O&M to supporting new and experienced O&M specialists across the state. If you would like her to come look at your students or ask her questions about orientation and mobility practices, contact her at 512-206-9203, or <ruthannmarsh@tsbvi.edu>.

STATEWIDE VI TRANSITION SPECIALIST – EVA LAVIGNE

What is the likelihood that your children/students will find jobs, satisfactory living arrangements, daily activities and/or so-

cial networks after graduation? How can educational teams support the families of these students and the young adults themselves to plan, prepare and succeed after IDEA services have ended? Eva Lavigne, a veteran teacher of students with visual impairments with the TSBVI VI Outreach team, is interested in being a partner in this process. She will team with others in Texas to help provide more statewide resources in the area of transition. Look for new website information, new products, a statewide focus group, and more as we build a stronger transition track record for VI students in Texas! If you would like Eva to contact you about transition issues for your student or child, contact her at 512-206-9271, or <evalavigne@tsbvi.edu>.

STATEWIDE MATH SUPPORT – SUSAN OSTERHAUS

Statewide assessments include a heavy emphasis on math, including complex graphs, tactiles and equations even from early ages—how do we teach these to students using braille or adapted materials? Susan Osterhaus, Council for Exceptional Children Clarissa Hug 2007 Teacher of the Year award winner, author of the Math Page on the TSBVI website, after 30 years direct instruction in the classroom will have the opportunity to provide more concentrated support for professionals in the field. We are delighted and excited to have her join the Outreach Team. If you would like local or regional training or answers to questions on math instruction you can contact Susan at <susanosterhaus@tsbvi.edu>, or 512-206-9305.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL!

Those personnel changes related to new initiatives gave us a chance to invite some new faces into the Outreach Program. Joining our Outreach Team next year as a new VI Outreach Teacher will be Sara Kitchen, <sarakitchen@tsbvi.edu>, who has experience at TSBVI and in Austin ISD. Our new Mentor Program Coordinator will be Chrissy Cowan, <chrissycowan@tsbvi.edu>, coming to us from Region 13 ESC. We are very pleased to have them coming on board.

We will continue to use the online request format for requesting school consultations and/or training. Fill in the forms at <www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/request-process.htm>, and then email or fax them to our office. We plan to "tweak" the forms a bit this summer, and make the applications more user-friendly. If you have any questions or problems with the online format, please feel free to call me, Cyral Miller, Outreach Director, at 512-206-9242 or email me at <cyralmiller@tsbvi.edu>.

Short-Term Programs at the Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

By Lauren Newton, Principal, TSBVI Special Programs

Abstract: this article describes how TSBVI short-term programs can address the needs of students who are academically on or close to grade level.

Key Words: blindness, visual impairment, TSBVI, Short-Term Programs

TSBVI Short-Term Program (STP) classes support visually impaired students who are academically on or close to grade level. These students are generally successful in the regular classroom, but could do much better if provided a brief time out to receive individualized, intensive training in vision-specific adaptive strategies. Parents and school districts may understandably worry that missing school to attend a STP would put their child irretrievably behind; however students who have learned in STPs almost unanimously say they ended up ahead in

TRAININGS ARE ALREADY SCHEDULED:

The Outreach Program will sponsor an array of distance ed trainings next year, plus host workshops to be held on campus at TSBVI. You can find the schedule for these events at <www.tsbvi.edu>.

Have a great summer, and when the school year starts, give us a call, or drop us an email—we look forward to working with you. We can't wait for the new year to begin!

Editors Note: We regret to inform our readers that Nick Necaize, who retired from Outreach a year ago, passed away on June 22, 2007. Nick was well-known and loved for his work both at TSBVI Outreach and before that, the Texas Education Agency.

Please join us in sending condolences to Nick's family and all his friends. He will certainly be missed, and we will all cherish his work advancing the education of children with visually impairments in Texas.

the long run. After years of serving these students, we have discovered that even though they are bright and successful, academic functioning students may:

- Demonstrate conceptual gaps in all areas of knowledge, limiting subsequent learning;
- Be unfamiliar with the most current technologies and tools available for visually impaired learners, which means they are not able to access the general curriculum as well as they might;

- Lack many essential nonacademic concepts and skills of independent living;
- Feel isolated and disempowered because of their differences, and therefore not strive to reach their full potential, in academic or personal areas of life.

These are the areas that STPs are designed to address.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Dr. Lauren Newton, principal, at (512-206-9119), or email <laurennewton@tsbvi.edu>.

SCHOOL YEAR 2007 - 2008

Our 2007-2008 calendar of classes are listed below. A detailed description of each class, as well as the general program description, can be found on our web page: <www.tsbvi.edu/school/special/short-classes.htm>.

FALL SEMESTER 2007

September 9 – 14	Elementary Access to Academic Skills #1 Special Focus: Math Tools & Concepts –or– Other Expanded Core Curriculum skills
September 23 – 28	Secondary Technology Week #1 Special Focus: Screenreaders & Keyboard Commands –or– Other Technology Instruction
October 14 – 19	Middle School Access to Academic Skills #1
October 25 – 28 **	Career Exploration Weekend (secondary)
November 4 – 9	High School Access to Academic Skills #1 Special Focus: Preparing for College – or – Other Expanded Core Curriculum skills
November 25 – 30	Math Tools and Concepts (secondary)
December 6 – 9 **	“Traveling with Low Vision” Weekend (grades 9-12)
December 13 – 16 **	Elementary School Independence Weekend #1

SPRING SEMESTER 2008

January 13 – 18	High School Access to Academic Skills #2
January 27 – Feb. 1	Elementary Access to Academic Skills #2 Special Focus: Technology – or – Other Expanded Core Curriculum skills
February 10 – 15	Secondary Technology Week #2
February 21 – 24 **	Middle School Independence Weekend: Outdoor Adventure
March 27 – 30 **	Low Vision Weekend (secondary)
April 3 – 6 **	High School Independence Weekend
April 24 – 27 **	Elementary School Independence Weekend #2
May 4 – May 9	Middle School Access to Academic Skills #2

** Weekend Programs

“Access” = Needed by VI students in order to access the core curriculum. For Access classes with a “Special Focus”, students may work in that area or choose any other area of the Expanded Core Curriculum.

How Vision Loss Impacts Learning

Fact: *Vision loss causes deficits in underlying concepts, which affects all aspects of instruction.*

80% of learning is acquired through vision. Classroom instruction is designed for sighted students who share a core of visually-acquired concepts. Students with weak underlying concepts lack a base for understanding higher order concepts taught in the general curriculum (TEKS). Subsequent learning is always built upon that weak foundation.

How A Short-term Program Can Help

We support academic achievement by providing hands-on, experiential instruction to demonstrate basic concepts that sighted children learn visually. Even secondary students need to fill in these gaps in order to master the curriculum.

- Reading: much vocabulary is learned visually—e.g., prepositions (under, after), adjectives (few, full), nouns (branch vs. tree, vehicle types), verbs (shrug, crash).
- Math: e.g., number, portions, spatial & temporal sequence, shapes, measurement

Fact: *Students with visual impairments have difficulty accessing the general curriculum (TEKS). They must learn unique access skills not addressed in the general curriculum.*

Tailored, intensive instruction in specific tools and techniques is required to master the core academic areas of “No Child Left Behind.” It can be difficult for local teachers of visually impaired students to stay current in these rapidly changing technologies, or to provide the level of intensity needed.

How A Short-term Program Can Help

We provide a short time away from multiple classroom demands to teach the unique knowledge and skills needed by academic students. We assist students with their school assignments so they don't fall behind.

- Computer technologies: screen readers /enlargers, electronic notetakers, scanning textbooks electronically, and unique strategies for creating and reading word documents, databases, spreadsheets.
- Braille for literacy or abacus; Nemeth Code for math and science.
- Tactile graphs, maps, tables. Tactile tools to measure time, weight, distance, etc.

Fact: *Research documents significant social isolation and dependence in visually impaired students taught in inclusive settings. Self-esteem correlates highly with motivation and success in school & adult life.*

Learning in the company of peers and adults who experience similar difficulties can be a life-changing experience.

How A Short-term Program Can Help

Short Classes at TSBVI allow students to belong to both worlds: they remain a part of their family and community while developing lifelong friends who share their unique experiences.

Students often return home with a renewed commitment to learning and enhanced feelings of self-worth. They are better able to describe and advocate for adaptations they need in order to compensate at school and in life.

Fact: *Adults with visual impairments often remain unemployed and dependent upon others, even if they were successful in school.*

National data indicate a 30% employment rate for persons who are visually impaired.

How A Short-term Program Can Help

Students attending Short Classes meet a range of successfully employed adults who are visually impaired. They listen as these people describe the challenges that they overcame to live independently, successfully, richly, and happily.

Texas Project First, new website resource developed by and for parents!

Website excerpts <<http://texasprojectfirst.org/index.html>>

Abstract: A review of a website resource that provides information and resources specific to students with disabilities and their families.

Key Words: Texas Project First, Texas Education Agency, special education, resources, parent training, blindness, visual impairment, disability

The Texas Project FIRST web site, launched in September 2006, is a collaboration of the Houston-based parent group Family to Family Network, the Texas Education Agency's Texas Continuous Improvement Process, and ESC Region 9 Parent Coordination Network. Texas Project FIRST is a natural extension of Family to Family's mission, which is to help families of children with disabilities by providing information, training, referral and support. In the first phase of Texas Project FIRST, F2F has developed this parent-friendly, Bobby-approved bilingual website to provide consistent, accurate information to help parents

understand the complex special education issues and become more effective participants in their child's education process.

The Texas Project FIRST website is designed to give parents accurate and consistent information about Special Education in Texas. While information is available somewhere on the worldwide web, lengthy web searches can be frustrating and websites can be cumbersome to navigate. Texas Project FIRST goal is to simplify this process by consolidating the most relevant information in a single website that is easy to use and navigate.

Games U Touch

Excerpts from gamesutouch website <<http://gamesutouch.com>>

Abstract: a review of educational but fun games created for elementary age children

Key Words: blindness, visual impairment, educational games, Cindy Holm

Games U Touch Founder and Owner Cindy Holm, is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired serving students from birth to 21. She began playing simple games using drill cards and the small selection of commercial board games that were available for the blind/visually impaired. Then, she discovered that she could use mat board and some tactile materials and make her own games that could be fun and unique!

Games U Touch has specially developed and tested these "edutainment" games to make them visually appealing as well as tactually interesting to elementary age

children, or individuals with elementary academic skills. Most of the games are made so that the teacher can reinforce any skill that needs practicing: vocabulary words, braille contractions, math facts, and more! You make up the cards and Games U Touch will provide the fun!

If you're not a teacher, and want accessible games for a child who has a vision impairment, these games are for you as well! They provide a way for sighted and visually impaired students to interact socially. The tactile aspects of the games actually make them more interesting for all learners!

Bring a Fellow to the Dance...Be a Texas Fellow!

By KC Dignan, TSBVI Outreach

Abstract: The Texas Fellows program promotes recruiting new professionals into the field of educating students with vision impairments

Key Words: News & Views, Texas Fellows, recruiting, visual impairments, education

The Texas Fellow program recognizes the hard work of recruiters. Most VI professionals were brought into the field by another person—inspired by a student, parent, or teacher. Making the move to working with students with visual impairments is a big step, especially for mid-career professionals. However, once people have made it, they stay.

As VI teachers and O&M specialists we affect the lives of children for years to come. We relish not being limited by a curriculum, and find satisfaction being able to respond to the needs of the child. Are our professional lives a bit different...not your typical educational job? You bet! And we love it.

Recruiting someone to work with students with visual impairments is a special challenge. It can take someone 12 to 18 months to make the change, and Texas Fellows are there to support their candidate during the process. They provide information and support as people move from a “comfort zone” to an “exploratory zone”.

We want to recognize these recruiting efforts, and send our appreciation to new VI professionals for making the change. If you’ve recruited someone into the VI field and they’ve started their coursework, all you need to do is complete the Texas Fellow application found on the TSBVI website: <www.TSBVI.edu/pds/texasfellow.htm>.

Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired – Outreach Program Honors

Texas Fellows

Recognizing VI Professionals in their Role as Recruiters



Texas Fellow
Caren Hodges
Karen Mascho
Christy Finstad
Kristin Holton
Cynthia Mullino
Meagan Matkin
Juan Dennett
Jesse Melgoza
Kathy Rodriguez

Candidate
Donna Nunn
Tanya Cook
Kara Chumbley
Mona Stavinoha
Amy Jo Stavinoha
Heather Janek
Jesse Melgoza
Donna Wagner
Susan Dunlop

For more information about becoming a Texas Fellow or working as a VI professional contact KC Dignan at kcd@tsbvi.edu



BulletinBoard

Announcements / Regional, State, and National Training and Events

Mail or email your item for the Bulletin Board to Beth Bible:
TSBVI Outreach, 1100 W. 45th Street, Austin, TX 78756 or <bethbible@tsbvi.edu>
An up-to-date Statewide Staff Development Calendar is posted at
<<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/vi.htm>>

The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas 35th Annual Family Conference



"DBMAT - Hand in Hand for 35 Years"
October 12-14, 2007
Camp John Marc (near Meridian, TX)

This learning weekend is for adult family members and service providers. Because DBMAT wants both parents and extended family members to attend and participate in the program sessions, we have made exceptional on site childcare available for your children with disabilities and their siblings. Children have their own planned fun activities separate from the adult learning sessions and activities.

Come prepared to learn, participate, have fun, make friends and enjoy.

Conference contact numbers for information or registration materials are:

Cyndi Hunley: 281-821-9005

Positive Connections Line: 432-264-6780

All Aboard for the 2nd Annual Texas Chargers Retreat

September 14 - 15, 2007

We are planning a weekend of fun, including:

- a vender fair with opportunities to access funding and resources in the state of Texas;
- a carnival complete with bounce house, games, train rides, snow cones and more;
- a parent panel, a keynote speaker, and many opportunities for networking;
- and to finish the day, a family picnic.

Our expert Speaker, David Brown will be joining us from California where he works as a deafblind specialist for California Deafblind Services. He has 25 years experience working with CHARGE individuals, and currently works with 44 CHARGE children. David has presented about CHARGE Syndrome all over the world. You won't want to miss this amazing opportunity!!!

Where: Peaceable Kingdom Retreat, Killeen TX, <peaceablekingdomretreat.com>

When: Friday, 9-14-07 starting at 5pm until Sunday, 9-16-07 at 10am.

Why: The Texas Chargers is a group of Texas families, friends, and professionals who are dedicated to helping children and young adults who live with Charge Syndrome. The primary function of our organization is to support the emotional and educational needs of people with Charge Syndrome, along with associated families and professionals, to provide them with a better quality of life.



How: Just call or e-mail for a registration package now!

Cathy Springer, 512-255-3176 <dacspringer@austin.rr.com>

or

Molly Roberts, 469-774-9921 <christian1013@verizon.net>

Cost: This retreat is offered at no expense to the family, we will even provide gas money if needed. We just want your Texas Charger to have a weekend of fun.

Volunteers are welcome. To sign up, e-mail <dacspringer@austin.rr.com>.

**Helen Keller National Center
National Training Team**

2007 Seminars

Transformation

Person-centered Approach to Habilitation

October 15 - 19, 2007

Registration Deadline -
September 21, 2007

Touching Lives

Interpreting Techniques for the
Deaf-Blind Population

November 13-16, 2007

The Magic of Technology

Adaptive Technology Training for
Teaching Deaf-Blind Individuals

December 3 – 7, 2007

All seminars are held at the Helen Keller
National Center, Sands Point, NY

For further information, please contact:

National Training Team
Helen Keller National Center
141 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050

Phone: (516) 944-8900 Ext. 233

TTY: (516) 944-8637

FAX: (516) 944-7302

E-mail: <ntthknc@aol.com>

<www.hknc.org/FieldServicesNTT.htm>

**Ninth Annual
Sports Extravaganza**

Sports Competition for Students
with Visual Impairments

October 19-20, 2007

**October 19 - Goalball Tournament
(5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.)**

Nimitz High School; 100 W. Oakdale;
Irving, Texas

Bowie Middle School; 600 E. Sixth Street;
Irving, Texas

**October 20 - Individual Events
(8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.)**

Nimitz High School; 100 W. Oakdale;
Irving, Texas

Who: All students with visual
impairments, ages 0-22

Cost: There are no entry fees, but
families will need to pay their own
expenses for transportation and
lodging if needed. (Some financial
assistance may be available from
your local Lions Club. Please call for
more details.)

Food: Lunch on Saturday will be provided
by Lions Clubs International District
2-X1 and 2-E2.

Hotel: The Drury Inn – Irving, Texas

For more information contact
Region 10 Educational Service Center,
Christy Householter – 972-348-1634
<christy.householter@region10.org>

or visit our web site: <[www.region10.org/
ssvi/Sports_Extravaganza.html](http://www.region10.org/ssvi/Sports_Extravaganza.html)>

**Ninth International
ACM SIGACCESS Conference on
Computers and Accessibility**

ASSETS 2007

October 15-17, 2007

Tempe, AZ

The ASSETS series of conferences is aimed at providing a technical forum for presenting and disseminating innovative research results that address the use of computing and information technologies to help persons with disabilities.

For additional information, please contact:

Enrico Pontelli
New Mexico State University
<epontell@cs.nmsu.edu>

www.acm.org/sigaccess/assets07

**The Virginia Murray Sowell Center
for Research and Education
in Visual Impairment**

**9th Annual Sowell Center
Distinguished Lecture Series**

**Dr. D. Jay Gense &
Ms. Marilyn H. Gense**

**Autism Spectrum Disorders
and Visual Impairment**

November 10, 2007

**Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX**

For more information, call Robin Rekieta at
806-742-1997 ext. 251,

or visit the Sowell Center web site.
www.educ.ttu.edu/Sowell2/default.htm

**The 8th Biennial
Getting In Touch With
Literacy Conference:
*Charting A Course To
Literacy***

Nov. 29 – Dec. 2, 2007

**TradeWinds Island Grand Resort
St. Pete Beach, FL**

Learn to Chart a Course to Literacy for
Students with Visual Impairments in a
casual, tropical setting.

- International experts on literacy
- Strategies for providing literacy instruction for **all** students

For updates and more information go to:
www.gettingintouchwithliteracy.com

Phone: (813) 837-7829

Fax: (813) 837-7979

E-mail: <kratzlaff@fimcvi.org>

**Texas School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired**

TSBVI Outreach

will be sponsoring workshops and
TETN broadcasts throughout the fall.

Topics currently planned include:

High-tech Math; Sensory Learning Kit;
LMAs; Assessment to IEP; Transition;
Recruiting VI Professionals; Adaptive PE;
PT/OT; Access to the General Curriculum;
the TVI in Consultation; and more.

Please check the Statewide Calendar on
the TSBVI website for the latest schedule:

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/vi.htm>

TX SenseAbilities

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<www.tsbvi.edu>

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Austin, Texas 78756
or emailed to section editors.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please call Beth Bible at (512) 206-9103 or email <bethbible@tsbvi.edu>.

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