

# SEE/HEAR

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AND DEAFBLINDNESS FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS  
A collaborative effort of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and  
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*Section Editor's Introduction: Continuing in the series of family-focused articles on the expanded core curriculum, this issue addresses literacy. I asked George Toone and Jonathon Taylor to share their thoughts on what compensatory skills they found to be useful in accessing the world of literacy. Both have chosen to share with you what braille has meant to them. I've also asked Melanie Knapp, who wrote about her person-centered planning experience in the last issue, to share a story about reading an experience book with her son to illustrate how literacy is important to everyone, including individuals with multiple disabilities, such as deafblindness. Other articles in this section are included because they address timely topics for the season. It's that time again to plan summer experiences for our children. Be sure to check out the updated camp directory on our website at <[www.tsbvi.edu/Education/camps.htm](http://www.tsbvi.edu/Education/camps.htm)>. While you're there, search the See/Hear archives for articles about camp and summer activities. Lastly, as we experience the beauty of spring, I hope each of you take a moment to reflect on the wonder of our children and the gifts they bring us.*

## **Spring's Blossoms Renew Special Bond with my Meredith**

By Sarah Barnes, Parent, Austin, TX

*Abstract: A mother reflects on her daughter growing up.*

*Key Words: blind, family, personal story*

*Editor's note: Sarah Barnes writes occasionally for the Austin American-Statesman about the joys and challenges of raising a child with special needs. She has graciously allowed us to reprint another one of her articles, originally published on May 4, 2003. Although I have not met Sarah or her family in person, I feel that I know them as I have followed their lives in print. (See/Hear, Fall 2001, Fall 2002) I am grateful that Sarah has shared their journey and believe you will sense the connection, also. This article may not be reprinted in other publications or websites without consent from Sarah Barnes. You may contact her at [adifferentroad@aol.com](mailto:adifferentroad@aol.com)*

The jasmine is getting ready to bloom in my front yard and the Carolina wrens have come back to nest in a nook above our front door. I love the feel of spring, a time of nature's gentle reawakening before the fire-breathing beast of summer makes its appearance.

It's a season when fresh spring dresses make my two daughters look catalog-perfect before the rips, stains and growing tummies force me to pull out the give-away box again.

But in recent years, spring has also been a reminder for me that as the seasons surely come and go like clockwork, life is not nearly so certain.

When my daughter Meredith was a newborn, I took her out into our yard to see the blooming jasmine. I told her that each year it would magically come back for her birthday on May 2. She slept through this first mother-daughter-nature bonding moment, but I didn't mind.

The next year I carried her out to the twist of green vines and white flowers and picked one of the blooms, holding it to her nose. She smiled a bit and she seemed to know it was something special. By then...I knew she was, too.

Between those first springs of my daughter's life, she was diagnosed with physical and cognitive delays as a result of an underdeveloped brain. We got the diagnosis on the phone on an unusually cold winter evening in early December.

Each December I still shed mental tears over that moment when I aged 50 years in five minutes. I didn't know what to expect then, but Meredith would not walk for several more years or utter a word till she was 4.

I could dwell on her delayed development, but with the arrival of spring, I merely have to take Meredith outside to see her metamorphosis.

"Watch this, Mama!" has become her newest phrase and she repeats it over and over again as she walks all over our yard. It seems this year she has found new endurance and strength in her legs. It still gives me goosebumps to see my little girl moving and talking at the same time.

I love how she and her 2-year-old sister Caroline can find an afternoon's worth of entertainment in the piles of fallen oak leaves and the "surprise" flowers that pop up after a spring rain.

Perhaps spring is a metaphorical break for me. It's lovely proof that the harshness of a winter memory does melt with the arrival of April.

If Meredith were a baby bird, she'd be leaving the nest about now. Thankfully we humans get to stick around for more instruction. Things aren't as simple as being able to survive the elements and reproduce. We have the opportunity to stop and smell the flowers and have a conversation about them. Sometimes I think that Meredith's understanding of these subtleties is far more important than a perfect gait or complete sentences.

On Friday, for the sixth year, the two of us went into the yard to remember another birthday. So happy birthday, Meredith. The jasmine is blooming again and so are you.

## Space Camp

By Maggie Johnson, Student, Victoria, TX

*Abstract: The author shares her experiences of attending Space Camp.*

*Key Words: blind, family, camp, personal experience*

Let me tell you a little bit about myself and a wonderful experience I had. I have achromatopsia and my acuities are 20/200 with nystagmus. But it never held me back from doing what I wanted to do. Then, a wonderful opportunity came.

My vision teacher told me about Space Camp. That particular week was only for visually impaired students. I thought it sounded like fun and looked forward to going. Then reality hit. I had to go to the library about a hundred times to get more information on the camp. I also wrote two essays for a chance to win a scholarship.

I won the scholarship, which paid for tuition. Next thing I knew, I was on a plane headed for Huntsville, Alabama. Jim Allan, who helped organize the Texas team, and my sixth grade science teacher accompanied me as my chaperones.

There were three different programs from which I was able to choose. I participated in the Space Academy, Level One for grades seven through twelve. Even though I was one of the few seventh graders in the group, it was still really fun. There were people from across the country, as well as Ireland and Australia. My three roommates made space camp an even better experience.

I did many terrific activities that gave me the opportunity to experience what it's like to be in space. Every night I had lectures about space and past missions. Some of it was fun, but not every minute was exciting.

Probably the activity I liked the least was a two hour mission with my team. We were in an orbiter simulator that let us experience what a real space mission was like. I guess I'm not ready to be a pilot because our orbiter crashed in southern Asia. "Houston we have a problem." I want to go again, and maybe by tenth grade I'll be better.

Overall, space camp was a great experience. One thing I've learned is that learning is never over. So, now here I am typing this article because my vision teacher says it will be good for college. She also had me do a PowerPoint presentation, which I gave to my science class. Not only did I learn more about rockets, but also my chaperone, who is a regular education science teacher, expanded her knowledge about space and the visually impaired.

## Students with Usher Learn the Ropes

By Kate Moss, Texas Deafblind Project

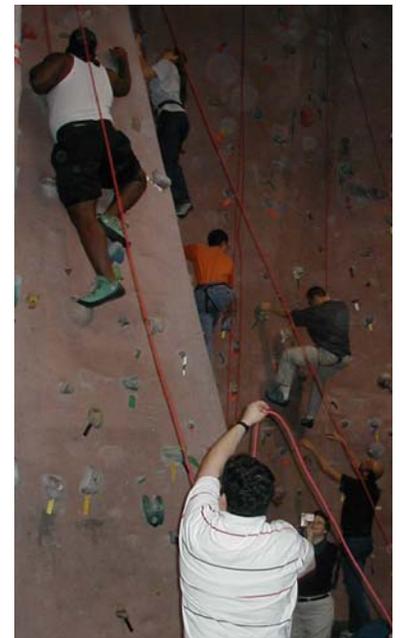
*Abstract: Students with Usher Syndrome from around the state gathered for a three day special program at TSBVI, during which they learned a lot and had plenty of fun.*

*Key Words: family, deafblind, Usher Syndrome, students, TSBVI*

Every two years, Texas Deafblind Outreach offers a special training event for students with Usher Syndrome and their families. This year for the first time, the event was developed in collaboration with Special Programs here at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Students came to TSBVI on Thursday evening January 22<sup>nd</sup> and stayed on campus through Sunday January 25<sup>th</sup> to participate in a variety of activities and training sessions. The students' families joined them on Saturday evening and everyone participated in a social sponsored by the Usher Syndrome Support Group of Texas and Texas Commission for the Blind. On Sunday their parents participated in a workshop session on genetics, presented by Robbie Blaha from Texas Deafblind Outreach.

The Usher workshop events are always very special for everyone involved, but this year seemed to be the best one yet. Because they stayed longer, the students were able to really take on some new challenges while they were exposed to new information about Usher Syndrome and deafblindness.

The students learned about technology, self-advocacy, college and technical training opportunities, and had an introduction to Orientation and Mobility basics. But their favorite activity was going to a rock climbing gym. Everyone took a turn climbing and belaying. A person who belays helps manage the climbing ropes and provides a counter weight so the climber won't fall if he or she slips. In addition to this breathtaking outing, the students had fun exploring the University of Texas campus, bowling and getting pizza.



*Students conquer the climbing wall*

On Sunday morning the students helped create and present a Power Point presentation for their families that contained photos of all their experiences throughout the weekend. Rosie Yanez, one of the mentor leaders,

signed the song during the presentation, while the families and all the other participants reveled in the pleasures of seeing the students having so much fun and learning new things.

Coming to terms with a vision loss when you are already deaf or hard of hearing and very reliant on visual communication is a very difficult thing for the students and their families. Having the opportunity to be with other young adults and older adults with Usher Syndrome while you learn about strategies for continuing to be a full participant in life is an extremely beneficial experience. These students who participated in this weekend demonstrated that they have what it takes to overcome the challenges living with Usher Syndrome can bring.

## About the CHARGE Foundation and Conference

By Jennifer Holweger, Parent, Pflugerville, TX

*Abstract: This article gives a summary of the CHARGE Syndrome Conference held in Cleveland, Ohio this past summer.*

*Key Words: blind, deafblind, family, CHARGE Syndrome, conference*

As I promised in the Summer 2003 issue, here is my follow-up story after attending the CHARGE Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. I'm so glad we were able to attend and now I really encourage those parents who have a CHARGER to join the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation. I learned a lot of new information and was able to share my story and experiences with other families as well as hearing their stories.

There was a CHARGE 101 Seminar which covered everything from the characteristics and diagnostic criteria, to the medical management issues and physical influences on development. It was very informative about CHARGE in general. We also attended a seminar on finding the genetic cause of CHARGE. Researchers believe that CHARGE is caused by a deletion and/or mutation of a single gene. Shayne, Cameron and I donated blood to a study that is being conducted by the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. They are predicting the results will be available in about five years.

Other seminars were: Toileting and Sleep Issues; Independent Living Skills; Endocrinology; Puberty in Adolescents; School Issues for Parents and Teachers; Transitioning; Adaptive Physical Education; Increasing the Effectiveness of Communication and Language; Interveners; A Sensory Motor Approach to Feeding; Cochlear Implantation; Audiology; The Determinates of Communication Ability; and Behavior Symposiums. I have handouts and/or notes on the above seminars. If anyone is interested in something, feel free to contact me at: <jenniferholweger@sbcglobal.net>. I would be glad to pass on the information. Your best resource is going to be the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, which I encourage you to join if you haven't already. Here is the contact information:

CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, Inc.  
2004 Parkade Blvd.  
Columbia, MO 65202-3121  
800-442-7604 (for families only)  
email: marion@chargesyndrome.org  
<http://www.chargesyndrome.org>

Good luck from our family to yours! The next CHARGE Conference is in 2005 and we are planning on meeting in Miami, FL. Hope to see you there!

## Braille Means Everything to Me

By Jonathon Taylor, Student, Round Rock, TX

*Abstract: A ten-year-old shares his thoughts on how braille has allowed him to pursue his favorite hobbies of reading and writing.*

*Key Words: blind, family, expanded core curriculum, Braille, literacy, personal story*

*Editor's Note: Jonathon Taylor is a 10-year-old fourth grader in Round Rock ISD (a suburb of Austin). Jonathon developed bilateral retinoblastoma at the age of 20 months. Both of his eyes were enucleated when he was three years old. I met Jonathon and his family seven years ago when both of our children were in the same preschool program for children with disabilities. From the very beginning, it was clear that Jonathon's family had completely embraced a positive philosophy towards Jonathon's blindness. My favorite memory of our boys being in class together was the day that my Jonathan came home so excited, he could hardly get the words out quick enough, "Mom, I saw the coolest thing today; it's called Braille and Jonathon uses it to read!" He went on in great detail describing for me how Jonathon used his Perkins Brailier to create words and then could read words faster than everyone else. Today, Jonathon Taylor is mainstreamed in a regular classroom and receives services from his TVI and O&M. He enjoys activities such as karate, playing the piano as well as climbing trees, playing with his Yu-gi-oh collection, and rough-housing with the best of them. As Jonathon shares in his article, his favorite activities, however, are reading and writing. When I asked Jonathon to share his thoughts about reading and writing, he jumped at the chance; he even spent part of his spring break getting it done. Thank you, Jonathon! And as enthusiastic as Jonathon is about his literacy form, Braille, other forms of literacy are just as important to others, as you will see in other articles in the See/Hear.*

So what does Braille mean to me? Well, I'll tell you. Braille means everything to me. If it weren't for Braille, I'd be miserable – or at least close to it. Without Braille, I couldn't read. I couldn't live without Braille. I mean, imagine it, you can't read any print, but you need to read this important letter. What would you do? If I couldn't read Braille, it would be the same way.

I love to read. But if I couldn't read Braille, how would I read Harry Potter books and stuff like that? Have someone else read them to me? You wish! I stay up a long time in the night reading and I can't have a person sit by my bed and just read away, can I? And then, how about schoolwork? How would I read the Math textbook? I couldn't. So I need Braille as much as you need print.

Of course Braille is important to me for reading and all, but there's writing too. I also love to write, maybe even more than I love to read. Writing is my greatest hobby, and if Braille weren't invented how would I write? Sure, there's stuff like the computer and the laptop, but they take much longer and are harder to use. And how would I read the stuff I'd written. Yeah, okay, there's Jaws (*a talking software that reads the windows operating system on the computer*), but it would be hard to carry around. A BrailleNote (*a high-tech, portable computer with a braille keyboard*) is much more convenient. Not only can you do the same things on the BrailleNote as on the computer, such as email, browse the Internet, download books to read, and have files to write in print and emboss (*print out in braille*), but it is also portable. A small, portable braille-printing machine. Cool, huh! But let's get back to what Braille means to me. As I was saying, without Braille I couldn't write. Without Braille, this article wouldn't exist. So you see, Braille is extremely important. When I grow up, Braille will help me so much, and all other blind people as well. That's what Braille means to me.

## What Braille Literacy Means to Me

By George Toone, Career Guidance Supervisor, Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, Austin, TX

*Abstract: The author shares his experiences of learning and using braille.*

*Key Words: blind, family, expanded core curriculum, literacy, personal story*

Braille holds many different meanings for those who encounter it in their daily life: Braille might be the buttons on the elevator; it might be a sign on a restroom at a business; and it could even be on a historical marker or monument commemorating someone or something special. There are many jokes about “driving by braille” that refer to those bumps or rough lines found on the side of the road that are keep drivers awake. And, there is always the proverbial question, “Why is there Braille on the drive-up ATM machines?” For those who don’t know the real answer to that, excluding ADA issues, those touch tone pads are manufactured by the same companies who have no idea whether these will be placed at drive-up machines, or in grocery stores. Not a glamorous answer, but a true one. Although ADA now requires all buildings to have braille signage, I find it a very sad thing that I still find places that are unmarked, or worse yet, embossed incorrectly. Instead of just griping about it, though, I think we have a duty to help make sure Braille signage is accurate. So, if you happen upon a Braille sign that is embossed incorrectly, I encourage you to talk with the building manager or owner about it or contact the company to help them know where the mistakes are and what needs to be fixed. If you know, you might even contact the company that made the sign to politely point out that there are mistakes. You can even take a bigger step in helping make sure Braille signage is right by offering to review the signs for them, either before they are installed or afterwards. I’ve done that myself and I know other people who have as well. Each time, the company or building was very happy to have the help because they do want their signs to be helpful to blind people. Well, enough about signs.

I was born with Retinopathy of Prematurity, a condition that was quite prevalent during the 1950s, that left me totally blind. Even though I lived on a farm in West Texas, my parents decided that I should be afforded the same educational opportunities as a sighted child. When it was determined that my vision was gone, my mother went immediately to attend a Braille school in Louisville Kentucky. I have no idea how long she was there but when she returned, she was a braille user. She began teaching me the basics at that time and I learned on a Perkins Braille. I was also fortunate enough to have had a kindergarten teacher in my local area who knew some Braille basics. I am not sure how she learned; maybe my mom taught her.

Then, prior to my first grade year, my parents hired a lady who had worked with TEA for many years, Janie Jones, to come out to the farm and to teach me Braille. By the time I went into first grade of public school, I could already read. I was a hyper kid, and since I already knew how to read prior to first grade, I was bored during class. TEA sent all of my textbooks, which consisted of Braille and those plastic thermoform books that I don’t think are used any longer. I also received Braille and audio books from the Texas State Library. I liked them both but preferred the Braille books. I loved to read so much that when it was “lights out” at the farm, I couldn’t get by with reading the thermoform books because my fingers would squeak and I would get busted by my mom.

I went to college in the 1990s. At that time, the electronic age was kicking off and there was talk about people not using Braille anymore. After all, if one used tapes and electronic format, one wouldn’t have to learn Braille, carry around big volumes, or have the expense of embossing. I never bought that and continued to use Braille in all of my daily work and leisure activities. I do use electronic media and tape for some things, but nothing will ever take the place of Braille for me.

The main problem I had with Braille was that I was a horrible speller because I didn't think of the words letter by letter. Due to contracted braille, I would look at the entire word in order to be able to speed-read. I also tended to spell phonetically. Then, when the computer age came along and I began typing on the computer, I could spell close enough in order to use the spell checker. The spell checker has improved my spelling tremendously.

In conclusion, I am so glad to see that braille is "in" with the blind educators and with the rehabilitation agencies. It is a way to feel connected with what one is reading and I truly think that this connection provides a person with fulfillment that may not be attainable from listening to tapes or CDs. Braille is fun, Braille is here to stay, Braille is beautiful, and Braille is and will always be a viable and meaningful means of communication for blind and visually impaired people of all ages. Thanks for keeping it around!

### **A Trip to the Doctor Turns...GOOD!!!**

By Melanie Knapp, Parent, Missouri City, TX

*Abstract: A mother shares her thoughts about connecting with her son, who is deafblind, while reading an experience book together at the doctor's office.*

*Key Words: deafblind, family, personal story, experience books, expanded core curriculum*

*Editor's Note: Melanie shared this story during the Transition Weekend we held February 21-22, 2004. I've asked her to share it with you, as I think it really brings home how anyone can access a story about an experience they are familiar with and "read" it with someone else. If you would like to learn more about experience books, including how to make your own, you can read the article "Creating and Using Tactile Experience Books for Young Children With Visual Impairments" by Sandra Lewis. You may access the article in the See/Hear archives at <[www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/books.htm](http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/books.htm)>.*

Gary and I picked up Christian, our 23-year-old son who is deafblind, from school one day so that we could take him to his doctor's appointment. His intervener, Ann Bielert, and Christian had been to Whataburger that day, and had made an experience book about their trip. Christian brought his book home with him so we could talk about it. On each page of the book, they had glued an item they picked up on their trip beside a tactile calendar symbol that related to the item. For example, they had taken the plastic lid and straw from his drink and glued it next to his symbol for drink. While we were waiting in the examining room for the doctor, I pulled the book out so we could read it together. Christian and I read each page. He would feel the symbol, and I would sign to him, and then help him sign it. We were having the best time; he was smiling and laughing. We were just about finished reading when the doctor came in and asked what we were doing. Well, this was the perfect opportunity for me to brag...so I did. We read the book again. Christian enjoyed it just as much. Meanwhile, his other doctor came in, and she wanted to know about Christian's book. We read it again. I was so proud of Christian. He loved it just as much the third time as he did the first. We laughed. Everyone was so impressed and had lots of questions.

This was "one of those moments" that you cherish and remember. It was the most incredible experience for me. We read this book together and I know he understood everything we talked about.

# The Impact of Literacy on the Expanded Core Curriculum

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

*Abstract: This article discusses the impact of literacy on the Expanded Core Curriculum and encourages parents and teachers to examine current methodology and practices for providing instruction to visually impaired students.*

*Key Words: programming, literacy, Expanded Core Curriculum, National Agenda, self-determination, learned helplessness*

*Editor's note: In this article, Dr. Hatlen makes reference to "media literacy." If you are unfamiliar with this idea, you should start by reading his article in the News & Views section on page 30 for an introduction to the subject and additional thoughts on literacy.*

The actual formal birth of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) happened with the development of the National Agenda in 1993, as the ECC became Goal 8. While few parents and professionals disagreed with the concept of unique educational needs for blind and visually impaired students, real commitment to the ECC has taken years. I once stated that the three stages needed for the ECC were acknowledgment of the need, commitment to the principle, and implementation. Acknowledgment occurred almost immediately. Commitment to the principle took longer, and actual implementation is only now gaining momentum. Some states, provinces, and regions immediately began working toward implementation, but the most difficult problem has been changing service delivery systems so that teachers have time to teach the ECC.

In the early years, as I preached ECC, I know I left the impression that all blind and visually impaired students needed all areas of the ECC. I sounded like those fine, but misguided colleagues of ours who promoted full inclusion with the phrase "All means all." My tendency to not make exceptions was noticed by some of my colleagues, notably by Susan Spungin, who wisely helped me understand the error of my ways. Now my message to all teachers is to *assess every area of the ECC*. You might well discover that there are students who are sufficiently competent in one or more areas that you don't need to address them, at least not at the moment.

## 1. COMPENSATORY SKILLS

The first area of the ECC has to do with compensatory skills, including communication modes. This has always been known as a unique need for blind and visually impaired students, and has been an area of instructional responsibility for teachers of the visually impaired (TVI). Literacy and its prerequisites are deeply imbedded in this ECC area of unique need. Mastery of these skills will ensure access to the regular education core curriculum. With the addition of media literacy to our definition, we have the opportunity to provide every blind and visually impaired child with literacy skills appropriate to their needs and abilities.

## 2. ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

Doesn't everything about orientation and mobility have to do with media literacy? If the use of touch is media literacy, then the grip, the tactile response of the cane to an object, location of a surface warning strip with the feet, identification of a landmark while trailing, and the reading of tactile maps are all literacy skills that enhance independent travel. If using air pressure and echoes, listening to traffic flow, using auditory cues, both natural and human-made are all listening skills, and listening is a part of our definition of media literacy,

then these skills are literacy skills. If use of low vision greatly enhances the mobility skills of a student, then this, too, is a part of literacy.

I must add that I have had a problem with the professional skills of orientation and mobility specialists because, from the outset of the profession, I have believed that they should know Braille and know how to teach it. The last time I explored this, I didn't find any O&M preparation programs that required Braille.

### 3. INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

As we explore the areas of the ECC and relate them to our expanded definition of literacy, it becomes apparent that all of the ECC is dependent on a level of literacy in order to become an integral part of one's life. I used to define "Independent Living Skills" as everything in the daily routine of a blind or visually impaired student, from personal hygiene to financial management. Tooth-brushing is an independent living skill, and it involves recognition of toothbrush and toothpaste, a literacy activity. Bathing requires knowing hot from cold, location, identification, and cleansing of body parts. Sounds like media literacy to me. In fact, any intended, purposeful action that results in a positive outcome will require some form of media literacy.

I'm not certain where the teaching of independent living skills stands in local school programs, but it has become a major instructional program in many, if not all, schools for the blind. At TSBVI, over 1/3 of our enrollment consists of students over 18 years of age. In discussing reasons for referral from local districts, the two major concerns of local educators and parents are in the areas of independent living skills and career education. This implies to me that the local school districts are having a difficult time delivering these areas of the ECC. More on this later.

This talk is becoming a bit redundant, largely because my expanded definition of literacy leaves almost all learning in the areas of the ECC dependent on media literacy. So I'll say just a few words about the remaining curricular areas.

### 4. SOCIAL INTERACTION SKILLS

Media literacy permeates this area of the ECC, especially auditory information. The student must learn to be a careful listener, for tone, volume, and emphasis will change the meaning of spoken words.

### 5. RECREATION AND LEISURE SKILLS

What first comes to mind are the many table games that require literacy in order to play. Goal ball, beep baseball, even bowling require auditory skills in order to participate.

### 6. CAREER EDUCATION

Interacting with fellow employees and employers is essential to success in employment. Thus, the basic level of literacy needed for employment is the auditory and expressive ability to communicate, a skill that I maintain falls under the definition of media literacy.

### 7. TECHNOLOGY

Of course, I'm aware of the fact that those who have developed and are promoting the concept of media literacy had in mind the marvelous contributions of technology to our access for information. But I would maintain that the child with severe disabilities who learns to use switches, or the child who learns from Intellitools, is also participating in media literacy.

PROGRAMMING

## 8. VISUAL EFFICIENCY SKILLS

Does it seem to you that those of us who strongly believe in helping children achieve the maximum utilization of low vision are having, once more, to strongly support our position? I can remember when the monumental work of Natalie Barraga so dramatically changed our profession. It was not an easy sell in those days, and now we seem to be having to defend utilization of low vision again. Do I need to explain the link between Visual Efficiency Skills and Literacy? I think not.

## 9. SELF-DETERMINATION

“What’s this?” you say. You thought there were eight curricular areas in the ECC, and now Hatlen presents a number nine! Some very wise people, especially Karen Blankenship, suggested that self-determination belongs in the ECC. It was not difficult to convince me! Remember, the litmus test for inclusion in the ECC is if it is a skill or knowledge that is learned differently by sighted and by visually impaired students. Do you believe that many of the skills and knowledge that result in self-determination are learned casually and incidentally by sighted children? Do you believe that blind and visually impaired children will need to learn self-determination in a systematic and sequential manner? Do you observe self-determination as being a problem with some, or many, blind and visually impaired students?

Many years ago, I read a book by Martin Seligman entitled *Helplessness* (W.H. Freeman and Company, 1975). It came out at about the same time as Robert Scott’s book, *The Making of Blind Men*. These two publications had a profound effect on me. Scott described his research (some called it his perceptions) of the manner in which agencies for the adult blind fostered a dependency on them among their clients. Thus, the number of clients always grew, since no client ever “graduated”.

Seligman’s book is about learned helplessness. And reading his book became my first initiation to the term. It has been used widely to describe many conditions since the book was published, but I think Seligman had it right. As I read this publication, I realized that the author never mentioned blindness, but the book was all about blindness. This is what it made me realize. We now have systems in place that deliver services to blind and visually impaired persons, birth to death. It is likely that the blind infant will follow a relatively seamless process from infancy, to preschool, to school, to rehabilitation, to aging, in which there are professional services available at every step. While this is to be desired when used appropriately, it can result in severe learned helplessness. Seligman points out that when decision-making and choices are taken away from persons, it can result in severe reactions, even destruction of the will to live. He cites many examples when intervention was needed that literally gave back to persons their own lives.

Do you agree that we run the risk every day of creating an environment of learned helplessness? I can think of so many examples!! It isn’t just taking away opportunities for making choices or making decisions. What we as professionals need to consider is if we need to create opportunities for blind and visually impaired children and youth to make choices, to make decisions.

One of the most unforgettable stories I have ever heard was from a TVI in rural Northern California. One day a blind third grader ate her lunch in the resource room. She finished half her sandwich, then announced that she would leave the other half on her desk, unwrapped, to eat for lunch the next day. The teacher could hardly contain herself, wanting to explain what the sandwich would be like the next day. But she said nothing, and the child came back the next day to a hard, inedible sandwich. This is allowing the child to make a choice, and to live with the consequences of the choice.

A rehabilitation counselor told me, many years ago, that when most visually impaired young people came into his office, the resulting conversation went something like this:

Rehab counselor: What can I do for you?

Client: Find me a job.

Rehab counselor: Oh, what would you like to do?

Client: I don't know. Just find me a job.

Rehab counselor: What are you good at?

Client: I don't know. Just find me a job.

I can imagine the client thinking to himself, "What's with this guy? He wants me to make a decision, or thinks I've already made a decision. The system has done all my thinking for me until now. Why doesn't this guy be a part of the system?"

This same rehab counselor told me that he longed for the day when a young man, right out of high school, came into his office and said: "I understand you will help me with my future plans. You need to know that I already know my strengths and weaknesses, and what I would like to do. As long as you guide and support me, we'll be okay. But you will not take over my life!"

Isn't this what all of us want for our students and clients? We want them to have the knowledge, skills, and literacy ability to own their own lives. And this is why I support adding self-determination to the ECC.

Before I close, I must remind you that the Expanded Core Curriculum is not an option, and it is not a second-level curriculum. Every child, every student, must be assessed in every area of the ECC, and must receive instruction in those areas that are needed.

I recently had a conversation with some people who suggest that the TVI is not necessarily responsible for the teaching of the expanded core curriculum, but is responsible for seeing that all areas are taught. The real challenge is to assemble others who have the time and can do the teaching. I have heard this many times, and most of the time the conversation then identifies people such as parents, rehab teachers, recreation teachers, classroom teachers, adaptive technology teachers, volunteers in the community, etc. This brings up a concern about whether or not the teacher(s) of the expanded core curriculum subjects must be skilled as teachers of blind and visually impaired students. I think so.

The specific knowledge and skills of TVIs are more needed for the developmental and adaptive requirements of the expanded core curriculum than they are for the regular core curriculum.

- Should we suggest that the parents must be the teachers of independent living skills and social skills?
- Should we suggest that the vocational teacher be the teacher of career education?
- Should we suggest that the P.E. teacher or recreation teacher be the teacher of leisure and recreation skills?
- Should we suggest that the P.E. teacher be the orientation and mobility specialist?
- Should we suggest that the general technology teacher be the teacher of technology?

I think not.

The very reason the Expanded Core Curriculum exists is that the skills and knowledge are so unique, so specialized to blind and visually impaired persons, that the generalist will have no idea how to adapt and adjust teaching to this population.

No, we need our best and most highly trained TVIs to teach the Expanded Core Curriculum!!

Is it safe to say that less than half the blind and visually impaired students in the U.S. are receiving instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum? Is it correct to say that this does not reflect the philosophy of the teachers, but rather the structure of the job? Let me share with you my concept of the future of instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum.

1. University preparation programs must give more emphasis to the Expanded Core Curriculum. This will help ensure that new teachers will have some basic skills in every area of the curriculum. If you agree with me that, for example, social skills are as important as reading skills, then should not the university preparation curriculum reflect this?
2. Before there was an Expanded Core Curriculum, itinerant teachers were running as hard as they could. Then two things happened. With further emphasis on inclusion, itinerant teachers found themselves stretched even more, as their caseloads and geographic areas increased. Second, teachers were told that they were expected to teach the subjects included in the Expanded Core Curriculum. Not only were they expected to teach them, they were expected to assess all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum and write IEP goals to meet them.
3. We must share the responsibility. If I assume that teachers of the visually impaired are working as hard as they can, and that emphasis on the expanded core curriculum is impossible to add, then I'm left with only one option: someone else has to do at least part of the work.

I suggest that perhaps it's time that we, you and I, begin to think about the education of a blind or visually impaired student as a shared responsibility between the local district and the state or regional school for the blind. Suppose that instead of either/or, it became both. Suppose we all sat down together, parents, local district personnel and representatives from the school for the blind, and planned the educational life of a child together. Suppose this led us to the conclusion that much of the Expanded Core Curriculum should be taught at the school for the blind, and that the child should have the privilege of moving back and forth between programs, depending on current needs.

A major flaw in our philosophy and approach to education for blind and visually impaired students is that there is one system that has primary responsibility for the education of each child. I am suggesting that we abandon this position, and explore how we might better meet all the needs of every individual child by having two systems share primary responsibility for the child. Consider the load taken off teachers of visually impaired in local districts. Think of the advantages to many, many children in making available to them the expertise of the staff at schools for the blind. Likewise, think of the advantages that local school education offers to students who might otherwise be destined to spend all of their school years at a school for the blind. So you see, such a partnership will need to work both ways. Every child should be able to access the benefits of both her local school and her regional school for the blind. Of course, there will be students for whom continuous attendance at a school for the blind will be most appropriate, and there will be students who spend their entire educational lives attending their local school.

My fervent hope for the future is that all decisions regarding delivery of educational services to blind and visually impaired students will consist of informed decisions made mutually by parents, local districts, and schools for the blind. Can you imagine a meeting of these representatives of a child, all informed advocates, where short- and long-term decisions will be made regarding placement? As soon as appropriate, the student himself will join this team, and together this group will plan his future education.

I envision a day when teachers and administrators from local school districts, together with parents, will sit at the table with representatives of schools for the blind. I envision a time when such a meeting will not generate any defensiveness, suspicion, hostility, or territoriality. I envision a time when neither local schools nor residential schools will “own” a child. Instead, the family will “own” the child, and the two educational systems will work together, as equal partners, to provide the very best educational program for every individual child. Should we settle for any less?

I leave you today with three challenges:

1. Make certain that every blind and visually impaired child has access to assessment and instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum.
2. Examine your definition of literacy, and consider using adjectives to differentiate various types of literacy.
3. Tap your creativity and that of those around you so that we may find ways of presenting Braille materials in a usable, reader-friendly multimedia format.

### **Technology to Promote Literacy: Ideas for Meaningful Literacy Activities**

By Sharon Nichols, Technology Specialist, TSBVI Visually Impaired Outreach

*Abstract: This article offers ideas on ways to use technology to promote literacy skills for visually impaired students.*

*Key Words: programming, technology, literacy, computers, note takers*

Learning to use a computer and note taker is an important skill for today’s blind and visually impaired students. Giving students a fun and functional reason to use a computer makes learning much more motivating than simply working through a series of lessons in how to use a word processing program. It is also important to teach your students to use the devices and applications they will need later in life, such as using email, keeping an organizing calendar, writing a journal, keeping a file of friend’s names and phone numbers, and using a note taking device or computer.

#### **Email**

In today’s world learning to use email applications is a natural activity for most students. The rewards are almost immediate! Here are some ideas to help your student jump into the glorious world of email.

- Have student use email to contact their VI teacher with questions or weekly updates on their assignments and activities. Depending on their access to equipment and homework load, the student may need a designated time at school to do this.

- Students can email each other. Several of our students met at a VI low vision day and exchanged email addresses.
- Email your student encouraging messages, information on interesting web sites, or even a joke. This gives them opportunities to practice opening and reading their email.

### **Phone book**

Help your student set up a phone book file using a computer or Braille note taker.

- Practice phone skills using the phone book file your student has created.
- Encourage your student to add new numbers to the file monthly (family, friends, teachers).
- Have your students call the State Library or RFB&D to order books. Have them keep a record of their orders in the phone book file.

### **Calendar**

Use the calendar function on your student's computer (as in Microsoft Outlook) or a Braille note taker. Your student could learn to use this function to keep up with class assignments and projects. All students need to learn to keep an assignment notebook and using technology can reduce the bulk of paperwork your student carries.

### **Writing a Journal**

Allow your student to keep their writing journal in their Braille note taker or computer.

- Have the student print out their journal entries at the end of the week to place in a notebook. Allowing them to keep one progressive journal per week gives the student daily practice on locating, opening, and saving files.
- Show your student how to create a "diary" on their device.

### **Notetaking**

Use technology in the classroom to take notes. Students can listen to or print out note files to study for exams.

### **Completing Classroom Assignments**

Students should use their note takers and computers to complete as many classroom assignments as is appropriate. (Remember that math should be written on a Braillewriter.) Technology allows students to turn in work on time and in a format that general education teachers, parents, and classmates can read.

### **Use Scanners to Access Materials**

Teach your students to scan print materials and use OCR software to access those materials. This will be a skill for life and will encourage independence!

## Braille Note-takers

- Reinforcement/Reward - Create a file called “Braille.” The classroom teacher can have the student turn on the APH Scholar or other Braille note taker to practice the Braille alphabet.
- Spelling Test - Help the student create a file called “spellwords.” Let them practice spelling their words for the upcoming test.
- Teach the classroom teacher how to connect the APH Scholar or Braille Note to the computer for a visual display. This will encourage the teacher to “help” with the note taker.
- Help the student create separate class folders for each subject (Science, LA, Social Studies). Have one file in each folder called “homework.” Have the student write their assignments and due dates then create a “hard return.” This will make each assignment appear on a separate line in the file, which will make it much easier for the student to access.
- Help the student create a file called “phone.” Follow the procedure for inserting a hard return after the name and number is written. This will allow the name and number to appear on the same separate line.
- Help the student load the games that come with the APH Scholar disk. Remember computer games are how most students learn to use the computer!
- Look at the TEKS for Technology, and ask your local tech teacher for ideas.
- One of your greatest resources is other VI teachers. Talk to each other and exchange ideas.

Warning! Although note takers have calculators built in, the Perkins Braille writer is still the best way to teach math skills. It allows both spatial and step-by-step verification for the Braille student.

## Computers

- Begin using “Talking Typer” from APH to teach keyboarding skills. The program is free and keeps important data such as words per minute, mistakes in lessons, and sequential lessons. This program is self-voicing, which means it speaks straight out of the box.
- Use “Math Flash” from APH to reinforce math skills. It has a variety of settings: addition, subtraction, multiplication, etc. The skill level can be set by the teacher, as well as how many problems in each drill set. Most important, it is a game!
- Use self-voicing games available from <[www.gamesfortheblind.com](http://www.gamesfortheblind.com)>. These games speak without a screen reader, and they are fun! Some of the games are: Battleship, Simon, Memory, Yahtzee, etc. The entire CD of games is just \$89.00. The games can be downloaded and used for free, but only for 15 days.
- Check out <<http://www.tsbvi.edu/technology/games.htm>> – Computer Games for Students with Visual Impairments.
- Consider using “Connect Outloud” from <[www.freedomscientific.com](http://www.freedomscientific.com)>. This is the same as JAWS, but only works with MS Internet Explorer, Outlook Express (email), and its own word processor. It is a great start for younger students!

## RESOURCES

<http://www.setbc.org/res/guides/default.html>

Print Resources for technology. Has guides for the Mountbatten Braille writer, Intellitools, ACC devices, and other VI technology.

<http://scis.nova.edu/~marston/order.htm>

- Curriculum for Teaching Blind Students
- Microsoft Word: Typing with Keyboard Commands
- 20 Printed Lessons for Teachers Braille, and Word Files for Students

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<http://www.tsbvi.edu/technology/dtb-iep.htm>

IEP Objectives for Using Digital Talking Books. If you don't know what these are, check it out!

[http://www.setbc.org/projects/virg/p2\\_09.html](http://www.setbc.org/projects/virg/p2_09.html)

Visually Impaired Resource Guide - Assistive Technology for Students who use Braille: Braille Lite

<http://www.setbc.org/projects/virg/part2.html>

Visually Impaired Resource Guide - Assistive Technology for Students who use Braille

<http://www.parquesoft.com/emp/altamira.htm>

Usando Word 2000 - conceptos básicos - tutorial. Tutoriales audio grabados en español que facilitan el aprendizaje para el manejo de las aplicaciones más comunes bajo la plataforma de Windows (teaching MS Word in Spanish).

<http://tte.tamu.edu/>

Texas Text Exchange - Welcome to the Texas Text Exchange - the first web-based digital library of electronic books for exclusive use by students with disabilities! The TTE has 441 books online and 100 active institutions in the US and Canada.

<http://www.pulsedata.com/handlers/display.cfm/8,420,18,24,html>

Pulse Data Releases KeyWeb, The First Portable Web Browser For Persons Who Are Blind

## Advantages of Uncontracted Braille

By Ann Adkins, Education Specialist, TSBVI Visually Impaired Outreach

*Abstract: This article describes the advantages of teaching and using uncontracted Braille to meet the literacy needs of visually impaired students.*

*Key Words: programming, literacy, reading, Braille, uncontracted Braille, contracted Braille, Grade One Braille, Grade Two Braille, alphabetic Braille*

In an effort to meet the needs of all visually impaired students, teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) must explore all forms of literacy and be able to teach them to their students. In the “News and Views” section of this edition of *SEE/HEAR*, Phil Hatlen encourages us to expand our definitions of literacy to include a variety of types of literacy, including print literacy, Braille literacy, tactile literacy, auditory literacy, and media literacy. In our ongoing look at literacy, we encourage teachers, students, and parents to consider all options, including a combination of approaches to literacy. In this article, we would like to examine the use of uncontracted Braille (also called Grade One Braille or alphabetic Braille).

For tactual learners, literacy should not be limited to the use of contracted (or Grade Two) Braille. In the past, many TVIs in Texas have emphasized the use of contracted Braille and, for some, Braille literacy has even been defined as the ability to read and write in Grade Two Braille. This may have been because most instructional materials used contracted Braille (such as the Patterns program from the American Printing House for the Blind) and because most Braille books were printed in contracted form. Other reasons for emphasizing the use of contracted Braille were discussed in a previous *See/Hear* article, “Reading for Everyone: Expanding Literacy Options” by Cyral Miller and Ann Rash (Summer 2001), which described the results of a survey of VI professionals. The primary use of uncontracted Braille seems to have been with students who had learning problems or additional disabilities, and the results of the survey showed that uncontracted Braille can “increase literacy options for visually impaired students with multiple disabilities.” (Miller and Rash, 2001). One common belief seemed to be that uncontracted Braille was a good method only for students who were not able to master the contractions of Grade Two Braille. In the list below, we encourage you to consider why other students might benefit from uncontracted Braille as well.

1. Uncontracted Braille can provide increased opportunities for literacy. Miller and Rash (2001) describe its use by a variety of VI professionals to expand literacy options for all tactual learners.
2. Uncontracted Braille works well with phonics-based reading programs, which are found in many elementary classrooms. Uncontracted Braille provides 1-to-1 correspondence and promotes letter/sound associations, important components of literacy instruction. The use of contractions does not reinforce basic phonics skills.
3. When students use uncontracted Braille, they can participate in reading lessons with their sighted classmates. They can use the same reading materials as their peers, only in a Braille format.
4. Teaching materials are now available to teach uncontracted Braille, such as *Un’s the One: Uncontracted Braille FUNdamentals*, from TSBVI, and *One is Fun*, by Marjorie Troughton (see link on TSBVI website, <[www.tsbvi.edu](http://www.tsbvi.edu)>). A greater variety of books are now available in uncontracted form (see <[www.braillebookshare.com](http://www.braillebookshare.com)>), and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is currently working to provide textbooks and assessments in uncontracted Braille. These changes help alleviate the concerns of many TVIs about having adequate materials and curricula to support instruction in uncontracted Braille.

5. Because there is a letter-to-letter correspondence between uncontracted Braille and print, it is easier for sighted peers, parents, siblings, and teachers to learn to read uncontracted letters. Everyone in a Braille reader's life can be a participant in his literacy.
6. Uncontracted Braille allows for immediate feedback from a classroom teacher. She doesn't have to wait for the VI teacher to transcribe Braille once she learns the basic letters or consults a cheat sheet.
7. Because the rules of spelling are the same in uncontracted Braille and print, students can sound out and spell words at the same time and in the same way as their classmates.
8. 39 of the 50 most common words in English have contractions when written in Grade Two Braille. Many also include lower cell signs. According to *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists* (Prentice Hall, Fourth Edition, 2000), these words make up about one third of all printed material and are the words elementary teachers emphasize to their students as "instant words." Examples include many common words such as the, and, of, from, for, and it and lower cell words such as be, to, in, was, were, and his. Common suffixes also appear in early reading and involve the use of Braille contractions, such as -ing, -ed, -er, -est. The use of contractions in these early words makes reading more difficult for beginning Braille readers.
9. There are 180 rules to learn in uncontracted Braille compared to 450 rules for contracted Braille.
10. Uncontracted Braille can promote greater speed and fluency in reading (Troughton, 1992; Miller and Rash, 2001).
11. Uncontracted Braille can promote more interaction with peers. Sally Mangold reported in the *Braille Monitor* (October 2000) that Minnesota students showed greater interaction and participation with sighted students, both academically and socially. Marjorie Troughton's research also showed greater peer interaction when students used uncontracted Braille.
12. The Minnesota teachers (Mangold, 2000) and the teachers involved in Troughton's study also reported higher academic achievement scores, in both reading rate and accuracy, with uncontracted Braille than with contracted Braille.
13. In *One is Fun*, Troughton described how motivation and interest in reading improves with the use of uncontracted Braille. Although difficult to measure, teachers in her study noted that it encouraged thinking rather than memorization, allowed their students to help their sighted classmates, and was "great fun." Miller and Rash also cite *Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy* (AFB, Wormsley and D'Andrea, 1997), which showed that uncontracted Braille can promote self-esteem.
14. Uncontracted Braille facilitates a quick transition from print to Braille for adults and adventitiously blind students (Mangold, 2000). Uncontracted Braille offers early successes with the mechanical challenges of Braille reading (Miller and Rash, 2001), and these successes can be easily recognized and supported.
15. Uncontracted Braille can be a successful approach to reading for students who later transition to the use of contracted Braille (Miller and Rash, 2001).
16. Fewer reversal errors have been reported when using uncontracted Braille, especially for those students who use uncontracted Braille for a longer period of time before they transition to contracted Braille (Troughton, 1992).

17. Uncontracted Braille works well with a linguistic approach to reading.
18. Uncontracted Braille works well with ESL students and foreign languages.
19. Uncontracted Braille works well for students using dual media for literacy, such as those students who use print but need Braille as well.
20. Uncontracted Braille can work well with deafblind students because finger-spelling does not correlate with Braille contractions.
21. Because it matches print letter for letter, students can use uncontracted Braille in a variety of board games (Monopoly, Scrabble), card games (Uno), and leisure activities with sighted friends and family members.
22. Troughton found that because it is easier to write in uncontracted Braille, children can write their own compositions sooner and can write more independently.
23. Marjorie Troughton found that books written in contracted Braille do NOT take up significantly less space than the same books written in uncontracted Braille. Research presented at the CEC National Convention in 1999 showed that contracted Braille only saved 20% (Ross, Scheira, & Urick).
24. Uncontracted Braille can make production of Braille materials easier and helps with computer-assisted Braille (Troughton).

Many of the ideas in this article were generated as part of a Braille Study Group to improve the Braille and literacy skills of visually impaired students in Texas. We hope that you will discover other advantages as you explore the uses of uncontracted Braille, and we encourage VI teachers, students, and parents to examine all literacy options. We also encourage you to contact the VI Outreach team with information about your experiences with uncontracted Braille (Ann Adkins at 512-206-9301 or <annadkins@tsbvi.edu>). Ann Rash, Education Specialist with TSBVI Visually Impaired Outreach, is currently collecting data on the use of uncontracted Braille in Texas and invites those who are interested in trying uncontracted Braille to contact her (at 512-206-9269 or <annrash@tsbvi.edu>) to participate in the collection of this data.

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# **Five Phases of Educational Treatment Used in Active Learning**

## **Based on Excerpts from *Are You Blind?* By Dr. Lilli Nielsen**

By Kate Moss, Education Specialist, Texas Deafblind Outreach

*Abstract: This article shares information from Dr. Lilli Nielsen's book, Are You Blind?. It focuses on five phases of educational approaches that teachers are to use in working with children if they are using an Active Learning theory approach.*

*Key Words: Programming, blind, deafblind, Active Learning, Lilli Nielsen*

Dr. Lilli Nielsen is the author of many books that look at the way children with visual impairments learn, especially those with other disabilities. Over a period of more than twenty years, she has developed her approach to working with these children that is called Active Learning. This approach is based on the notion that all children learn exclusively by doing until the developmental age of about three. The actions of examining and experimenting with objects using their bodies, is the foundation for the development in cognitive, motor, problem-solving and social skills. She believes that our role in helping children to learn is to create environments that build on skills the child already has, to encourage him to use his body and mind for higher-level tasks. In her book, *Are You Blind?* She discusses five phases of educational treatment that teachers are to use in working with children. This article will examine these five phases and share some of the highlights of this book.

It is important to note that before beginning to work with any child, a thorough assessment of his/her skills and emotional development is needed, so that you know where to begin. If you start too high you will likely frustrate the child and if you start too low, you run the risk of losing the child's interest and motivation. Dr. Nielsen has developed a comprehensive assessment tool, the "Functional Scheme" (Nielsen, 2000), and a curriculum to help teachers called the *FIELA Curriculum – 730 Environments* (Nielsen, 1999).

### **PHASE I: TECHNIQUE OF OFFERING**

#### **Children at this Level**

Children at this level of development may seem reluctant to do much. They are often passive or engaged in self-stimulatory behaviors. Their world exists for the most part within the confines of their own bodies. They seldom seek out others for social interactions and may have limited experiences interacting with objects and their environment. This generally occurs because of motor disabilities or health issues that make movement difficult, and/or sensory disabilities that prevent the child from being enticed by the sights and sounds that motivate a typically developing child.

#### **The Role of the Adult**

At this stage, Lilli recommends using the technique of offering with the child. First of all the adult will need to set up an environment, such as a Resonance Board with many motivating objects, so that the child can come in contact with them incidentally if he or she makes any movement. The adult will also be with the child, either sitting alongside the child or supporting the child in a sitting position from behind if the child trusts the adult enough for this close contact. If not, the adult needs to respect the child's need for distance and only move in as close as the child seems comfortable with at any time. One of her goals at this level is just to have the child stay in the same room with her.

The adult's first job is to simply offer the child toys and objects by placing the objects under the child's hand. The child may touch or grasp the objects when and how he or she pleases. The adult does not talk to the child while the child explores the object in his or her own way. If the child drops or pitches the object, the adult simply offers another object. While offering the objects, the adult also must observe and take note of the objects the child seems to enjoy and those he seems to dislike. What is it about the object that seems to interest the child? What are the actions the child takes on the object? How does the child explore the object and with what physical actions (banging, mouthing, throwing, rolling, etc.)? What distresses the child and how does he show that distress? Does the child show interest in contacting the adult? How does he do that?

### **Purpose of the Offering Technique:**

- To convince the child that he can trust the adult has no intention of demanding that he does anything at all. Lilli's only demand is that she wants to play in the same room as the child.
- To observe the reactions of the child.
- To learn about the child's likes and dislikes.
- To find out what may frighten the child most.
- To learn about the child's way of contacting, using this to assess the emotional level of the child.
- To introduce sound self-activity.
- To provide the child with the basis for successful introduction to phase II.

### **Points that Lilli Emphasizes at this Level:**

- Do not move too close to the child too fast — move in a little and watch his reaction.
- Display an active and positive interest in whatever the child is doing.
- Some children will not initiate play until they feel certain the adult has left the room. Periodically stop playing for a minute to a minute-and-a-half and just sit silently to see how the child responds. Does his behavior appear to be an invitation for you to continue your activity?
- Everything the adult does should be done as an "offer." If the child attempts to initiate an activity, don't make a big deal about it; act as if he did that every day.

## **PHASE II: TECHNIQUE OF IMITATION**

### **Children at this Level**

Children at this level are generally somewhat more interested in things outside their own bodies, although they still may exhibit withdrawal, especially with unfamiliar people or people they do not trust. Their interests may also be very limited in scope. They may continue to show a lot of self-stimulatory behaviors, but are more aware of others and can be enticed into interactions with trusted people. They typically don't initiate many interactions or have limited ways to make contact with others. They are able to play more with objects, but their play with others is more at a level of parallel play rather than interactive play. They also may have only a few actions they perform on objects and have only limited participation in activities. At this point the child may seem unsure of himself in many of his actions.

## The Role of the Adult

At this level the adult continues to set up the environment with objects and activities that are highly motivating to the child. For example, if the child likes an object that vibrates, the adult will try to find many different objects that vibrate in differing ways. If the child is particularly fond of a certain color or texture, the adult finds things that seem to expand the child's experience with other objects that share that quality. One child we know liked banging on and playing with disposable aluminum pie pans. The quality about these objects that seemed to be of most interest to him was the sound they made and that they could be bent to change shapes. He might also have enjoyed that they were lightweight, shiny and cool to the touch. Other things that could be offered to him would include: many sizes and types of metal containers such as individual pot pie pans, turkey roaster, tin cookie canister, metal coffee can; sheets of shiny aluminum foil; wire whisks; metal springs; metal spoons; metal ball bearings or Chinese Mediation balls; and other shiny and/or pliable materials.

In this phase the adult begins by imitating the actions of the child on the objects. For this reason, it is a good idea to have multiple numbers of an object. If the child bangs on the object, so does the adult; simply playing alongside the child at the same level. After a time, the adult can introduce a new action with the object and see if the child will imitate him. If the child does, great! If not, the adult should go back to imitating the action of the child again. This is a conversation of a sort, a turn-taking game. "You show me something, and I pay attention and copy you. Now I show you something. Maybe you will pay attention to and copy me. Now it's your turn again."

## The Purpose of Imitating

- To increase the child's interest in activities happening nearby.
- To increase the child's ability to take initiatives.
- To increase the child's belief in himself.
- To introduce activities and movements not as yet performed by the child.

## Points Lilli Emphasizes at this Level are:

- Imitation is primarily through auditory and tactile sensory modalities.
- If the child throws an object, don't correct him/her! Pick up the object, repeat your play and then place it before the child. It is best to have two of each object — one for child and one for adult.
- The adult should begin by imitating child, then add some more constructive games (e.g., putting materials together or into one another) briefly before returning to the action the child began.
- An increase in crying or screaming in a child who was doing that behavior before should be read as a positive "call for attention" from the adult.
- Your goal is to give the child the opportunity to discover that being with the adult is "pleasant and exciting, and may include new auditory and tactile experiences."
- You also want the child to have the opportunity to "discover that he can take initiatives and that doing so leads to the ability to master something in his surroundings."
- He learns he has more actions to contribute to the interaction. This provides him with growing self-identity and ability to initiate interactions with other people.

## PHASE III: TECHNIQUE OF INTERACTION

### Children at this Level

Children at this level are beginning to be interested in more interactive types of games (Lilli calls these “you to me and me to you” games). For example, you might have a bowl with marbles that you both hold on to and take turns pushing and pulling it back and forth between you. You want to see the child attempting to take a turn. The child may not necessarily initiate these games in the beginning at this level, but can be more easily engaged with others. He may, at times, want to take time out for his own exploration of an object, but will come back to the adult to share his interest after a time. This is the child that is interested in his environment and the actions of others and so is ready to begin learning that he can help others. This is a child who may also need support to transition from an enjoyable, interactive activity to a new activity without the adult. Some children at this level may fuss when an interaction comes to an end. It is as if the child were saying, “I want you to stay” and signals an emerging self-identity. The child begins more and more to attempt to make contact with others as he progress at this level.

## PROGRAMMING

### The Role of the Adult

The adult sets up situations and environments that will foster interactive games. It is important for the adult to be patient and wait for the child to take his turn without trying to persuade him to act. Simply be quiet and still. If the child is trying to complete a motor skill that he has not yet mastered but matches his motor development, the adult can say, “You can help me.” If the child will use his hands, the adult needs to provide every opportunity for the child to familiarize himself with the activity and participate, and to complete the moment when he wants to do it. If the child will not use his hands, the adult can model the activity as close to the child’s hands as the child will allow. This allows the child to have control of his hands, and he can withdraw them when he needs a break. Lilli also cautions us to stop playing the game with the child while the play is still enjoyable. If it goes on longer than the child enjoys, the child may be unwilling to continue to interact with us. Another point Lilli makes is about the adult giving the child “presents.” Say “I put milk in your cup,” instead of “There is milk in your cup.” The whole notion of “yours versus mine” helps promote the child’s self-identity. Use a phrase like, “Your toys are on your shelf and my toys are on my shelf.” The adult also prepares the child when it is almost time for the interaction to come to an end so that the child does not see the adult as rejecting him.

### Purpose:

- To help the child to learn sound dependency on one or several people.
- To help the child to initiate interactions.
- To enhance the child’s development of self-identity.
- To give the child the basis for social development.

### Points Lilli Emphasizes at this Level:

- Focus in on “you to me and me to you” games.
- If the child becomes interested in something he wants to explore on his own, this should be respected. Wait patiently for a blind child to use his fingers to “look” at the object.
- It is important always to wait for the child to initiate his part of the game.

- Complete an action that may be too complex for the child to do, but at the same time tell the child he can “help” with the action.
- Move at a slow pace. Know when the child “has enough to consider for a while.”
- Tell the child before you come to the end of the activity that you will be leaving and that you are going on to a new activity. He may continue to play on his own if he chooses to.
- If the child begins to say “more” or “again,” names the adults, or seeks out adult attention, he is ready for Phase IV while continuing with Phases I-III.

## **PHASE IV: TECHNIQUE OF SHARING THE WORK**

### **Children at this Level**

The purpose of using the techniques of phase I, II, and III focuses on the child’s emotional development. It is done by establishing “an exchange and balance between periods of interaction and sound self-activity, between dependence and independence.” In the next phase, the child is at a place where he is ready to learn that taking action and interacting with others does not mean that he has to do everything or do it perfectly. The child exhibits confidence in performing some actions or activities. He has some beginning understanding of time and a sequence of events. He may appear threatened when familiar activities are changed slightly.

### **The Role of the Adult**

Set up environments and activities that give the child tasks to do that are based on the things the child has experienced success in doing. In the beginning the tasks can be completed in a few seconds up to a few minutes without any consideration for how perfectly the child can complete them. The adult needs to let the child know which part of the tasks he will complete and which part the adult will complete. If the child is reluctant to do the task after being asked several times, the adult can suggest they do it together. The adult must make sure to give the child plenty of time to complete the task, but if he still won’t do it, consider if the task is too hard. In complex tasks the adult may need to use various techniques (offering, imitation, etc.) for different parts. Let the child know how long the task will last and what will follow. This is when you can begin to teach time concepts like yesterday, today, tomorrow, now and next. It is important to have an established schedule.

### **Purpose:**

- To increase the child’s experience of success.
- To involve the child in new social relationships.
- To increase the child’s interest in acquiring new abilities.

### **Points Lilli emphasizes at this level:**

- Help the child learn that to be the one who does something does not necessarily mean that one has to do everything or do it perfectly.
- The abilities the child has been successful with in previous phases form the basis for deciding which activities can be used for the technique of sharing work.
- Keep tasks short (few seconds or minutes) initially, accept whatever the child does as correct.
- Explain each time which parts of the activity the adult will perform and what the child will do.

- Give plenty of time for the child to initiate the task and wait silently and calmly — be neutral.
- Let the child know how long the activity is supposed to last.
- Try to keep the environment the same or only make gradual changes.
- Before going to more complicated and longer lasting activities the choice of technique for every part of the activity should be given careful consideration.

## PHASE V: TECHNIQUE OF CONSEQUENCE

### Children at this Level

Before using techniques at this level the child needs to have an emotional age of two years. This is when the child is ready to learn that his own actions have consequences. The child must show some confidence in what he can do and feel secure interacting with others generally. He may still have some difficulty initially in handling changes, but begins to show more coping skills at this level.

### The Role of the Adult

The adult needs to model how consequences work for the child through a discussion of the adult's actions. By this I mean things like saying, "I have to stop playing and cook dinner, or you will not have anything to eat." Or, "I need to ask you to wait; I need to find a clean shirt for you." Then after a time the adult begins to set up situations where the child can experience the consequences of his actions. For example, "If you want me to pour more milk, you must put your glass on the table." The adult may accept a less than perfect response from the child, and may need to offer encouragement either through prompting or modeling. For example, "See you can put your glass here." The child begins to understand choice-making.

### Purpose:

- To help the child to endure meeting demands.
- To help the child to endure changes in life.
- To help the child to feel self-confident, which is fundamental to the ability to make decisions about his own life.
- To establish the basis for the sense of responsibility.

### Points Lilli Emphasizes at this Level:

- When the child feels secure and confident in performing different activities and has received information about the consequences involved in activities, it should be possible to let the child experience consequences. BUT only through activities the child is able to perform.
- As the child is able to fulfill more and more requests he may demand more attention — don't overly praise but rather act as if it is the most natural thing in the world that he can do something.
- As independence increases the child may be able to tolerate that he sometimes is unable to succeed in what he intends to do. He will become better able emotionally to accept significant changes in his life. As he moves higher, he will be able to make friends with other people, decide when faced with situations that he has a choice.

## CONCLUSION

*Are You Blind?* is a book that offers a great deal of guidance in working with a child who is at an emotional developmental age under age three for a typical child. By using the five phases of educational treatment Dr. Nielsen outlines in this book, we can help the child grow emotionally. When the child reaches the emotional age of three, then new approaches to learning may be available to him. We can begin to consider incorporating other more traditional ways of teaching into our plans with these children beyond simply learning by doing.

### **The Three Low Incidence Disabilities Decentralized Function Presents Dr. Lilli Nielsen**

By Kate Moss, Education Specialist, Texas Deafblind Outreach

*Abstract: a review of the workshop, Active Assessment and Active Curriculum Planning Leads to Active Learning, and a discussion of the Functional Schemes Assessment developed by Dr. Nielsen.*

*Key Words: Active Learning, professional training, Functional Schemes Assessment, FIELA curriculum, Multiply Handicapped, Blindness*

I was privileged to be a participant at the “Three A’s of Active Learning: Active Assessment and Active Curriculum Planning Leads to Active Learning” which was held in Austin on January 19-21, 2004. This event was sponsored by the Three Low Incidence Disabilities Function (LID), which is facilitated by Region 3 Education Service Center in Victoria, TX, and was designed to provide training to professionals on Active Learning Theory developed by Dr. Lilli Nielsen from Denmark.

This three-day workshop included over 286 participants representing 63 educational teams from the twenty education service center regions. Teams were composed of different mixes of people including special education teachers, motor therapists, vision specialists, speech therapists, diagnosticians, special administrators, and parents. Each participant came as a part of a team that focused on from one to three target students.

Each team was required to complete at least the gross and fine motor portions of the Functional Schemes Assessment developed by Dr. Nielsen on the student(s) in the fall and submitted evidence of that to the LID. This assessment is designed for use in conjunction with the FIELA Curriculum on Active Learning. Each team was given a copy of the FIELA Curriculum and will be implementing Active Learning instructional strategies with their student throughout the spring. They will send in evidence of the work they are doing to the LID. Then the team will update the Functional Schemes Assessment in the spring of 2004 to document progress for the student; this data will also be sent to the LID. Additionally each team will

participate in two TETN (video conference) meetings. The first of these meetings takes place March 30<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to noon with the discussion centering on implementation of the activities and the curriculum. On August 30<sup>th</sup> another meeting will take place from 9 a.m. to noon via TETN; the focus of this meeting will be on sharing the results of the project and how to continue participation in Active Learning instruction.



*Dr. Lilli Nielsen (center) at the training with Mary Scott and Brian Jones of Region 3 ESC.*

Mary Scott and Brian Jones of Region 3 head up the LID network. They have done an exceptional job in pulling this training together and compiling the follow-up data. It is their hope to continue to monitor students who have participated in this process over a period of years to see the long-range impact of utilizing this instructional approach.

Another real treat for me that occurred as a result of my participation in this workshop was having the opportunity to visit with Dr. Nielsen briefly. I shared with her the article, “Five Phases of Educational Treatment Used in Active Learning,” (see page 21) in order to get some feedback on the information she includes in her book, *Are You Blind?* I deeply appreciate the time she took to visit with me about this article and her encouragement to share it with our SEE/HEAR readers.

Dr. Nielsen has made such wonderful contributions to the education of children with visual impairments and deafblindness in Texas and throughout the world. We were sad to hear her say that this might be her last visit to Texas since it is such a long journey from her native home of Denmark. We will miss seeing her, but I don’t think we will forget her or her excellent contributions to the field of education of children with visual impairments.

### **New Beginnings! Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Division for Blind Services is Born!**

By Terry Murphy, Commissioner, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)  
(with addition material from DARS)

*Abstract: This article discusses the change from the Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB) to the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Division for Blind Services, and the background of Barbara J. Madrigal, the new Deputy Director of this Division.*

*Key Words: News & Views, DARS, Division for Blind Services, agency consolidation.*

*Editors Note: As Terry Murphy wrote in previous editions of SEE/HEAR, the last few months have brought momentous changes to the agency previously known as the Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB). The merger of rehabilitation services, services for the blind, services for the deaf and hard of hearing, and early childhood intervention services into the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has been accomplished. The TCB has been abolished, and has now become the Division for Blind Services. What has not changed is the dedication and commitment of Division staff members to provide top-quality services to Texans who are blind. Terry Murphy accepted the position of Commissioner of DARS, and we would like to share with you his welcome message to all DARS employees. Also included is additional information from the agency on Barbara J. Madrigal, the new Assistant Commissioner of the Division for Blind Services.*

**NEWS & VIEWS**

I have just accepted the position of Commissioner of the new Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). This means that I will be counting on those of you who will be a part of this new department from this day forward to personally and professionally help make it the best it can be within the new integrated health and human services system.

The formation of DARS means that the service programs of four great agencies with proud histories and outstanding service records will soon become united as one. Many of us have spent most of our working years with these agencies. The important thing, however, is to remember that our combined purpose is still the same—to provide meaningful, effective, and life-altering services to Texans who require assistive and rehabili-

tative services to become or remain as independent as possible and to reach their potential. I know I can count on you to transfer your long-standing agency commitment to our new department.

Part of my new job is to lead the change from separate agencies to an integrated system that encourages creative thinking in the development of a world-class service delivery system to Texans with disabilities or delays in their development. This is something with which I am very familiar, so today is the first day that I'm challenging you to begin thinking outside your comfort zone — today you have the opportunity to become an active part of what DARS is meant to be. I'm also asking for your commitment to help create an environment within DARS in which it's a pleasure to come to work each day. We can do this by *choosing* to bring to work every day a positive attitude focused on our mission and by respecting each other. Each of us has to be open to innovation and change to make this consolidation seamless and invisible to those folks who have depended on our individual agencies for so long.

I can promise you that I am going to do my best by working with all of you to create an atmosphere in which you are free to share your ideas. We are going to build a system for providing assistive and rehabilitative services second to none in the country with similar human service systems. You bring that legacy with you and I bring that experience with me to our new department. Therefore, I think we're already in a mighty good position from which to start.”

On March 3, 2004, Mr. Murphy announced the selection of Barbara J. Madrigal as the Assistant Commissioner of the Division for Blind Services. Ms. Madrigal has served as the Deputy Director of Programs for the Texas Commission for the Blind for six years. Her depth of experience in providing services to individuals who are blind/multiply disabled is extensive, ranging from her start as a vocational rehabilitation teacher 25 years ago to her position as Deputy Director of Programs for TCB, which oversaw all field and central office program staff and the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center. Under her strong and enthusiastic leadership, the agency's statewide confidence building activities have become the firm foundation of all consumer service programs. A strong believer and supporter of tapping employees' full potential, she created and still leads the division's many diversity initiatives.

Ms. Madrigal has a Bachelor's degree in Education for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired and Early Childhood Certification. She has Master's degree in Human Services Administration. She has taught middle school deaf children with the San Antonio Independent School District, sociology at St. Edwards University in its migrant program and has worked with the American Red Cross in its services to military families division. Her many honors over the years include being selected as TCB's Employee of the Year. She also received the State Agency Council's Outstanding Women in State Government award for Outstanding Management.

When accepting the position, Ms. Madrigal stated that the new Division for Blind Services begins with a great, experienced staff and that she's looking forward to working within the new DARS structure to continue providing services second to none in the country to Texans who are blind. “Our staff is at the heart of effective services. Team building and involvement will remain a priority.”

In addition to her family and friends, Barbara's interests include being an avid sports fan—especially her hometown San Antonio Spurs—and collecting Coca Cola and Fred Astaire memorabilia.

The process of consolidating these agencies is ongoing; we will continue to provide you updates regarding DARS and the Division for Blind Services. We welcome this opportunity to continue to bring you unsurpassed habilitation and rehabilitation services.

## Literacy According to Phil

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

*Abstract: A discussion of the need to expand the definition of literacy for visually impaired students.*

*Key Words: blind, deafblind, literacy, reading, Braille, listening skills, media literacy*

As some of you know, I have long had a problem with the generally accepted definition of literacy. Because those with whom I've discussed my issues have suggested that I challenge myself on this topic, I'm going to share some thoughts with you.

What is it to be literate? If one can read and write print or Braille, is one literate? If one cannot read print or Braille, is one illiterate? What follows is based on a presentation I gave at my school recently:

I firmly believe that every child has the capability of becoming literate. If we are creative enough, if we are imaginative enough, if we persevere enough, every child at TSBVI will become literate. It all depends on how we define the term. And I maintain that the definition must take into account the unique characteristics of blind and visually impaired children.

I have close friends and colleagues who say to me that to be literate means to be able to read and write, either in print or Braille. They can point to most dictionary definitions of literacy to support their position. I have a very big problem with this, for two basic reasons. First, when one or more sensory input systems are impaired, then that definition needs to change. Second, if the term "illiterate" continues to carry a terribly negative connotation, then those among us who will not read or write print or Braille are relegated to a status we don't deserve.

I remember, early in my experience as a teacher of visually impaired children, discovering that a high school Braille reader has no chance of keeping up with her sighted peers, using Braille materials only. A simple fact comes into play. Braille, by its very nature, will be read more slowly than print. A reasonably good Braille reader will read at a rate of around 100 words per minute. A reasonably good print reader will read at a rate of 250 to 300 words per minute. Thus, the sighted high school reader will cover three times as much material in the same period of time as a Braille reader. This is not a condemnation of Braille, it reflects the differences between visual reading and tactual reading. Therefore, most blind high school students use recorded books or live readers as a supplement to Braille in order to cover the amount of reading material they are assigned in a regular school. Braille will, in most cases, remain the medium of first choice, and most competent Braille users will continue to use it in all reasonable situations. They will supplement it by "reading by listening". Do you buy that? Do you think of listening to a text or a novel as a form of literacy? For those of you who think this is a slam-dunk, let me tell you it's one of the most controversial topics in our profession. Let me quote what one writer said about reading by listening:

*"There are two important reasons why listening is not literacy. First, to say that a person who reads through listening is literate would require a change in the operational definition of literacy. Sighted persons who cannot read print are considered illiterate. Such persons may have exceptional skills in reading by listening, but these skills are not a part of the traditional definition of being literate. Second, the definition of literacy involves the ability to both read and write. There is no assurance that persons who claim to have achieved literacy through listening can write at all."*

Well, so much for one person's narrow-minded position on literacy. But wait, who was the author? It says his name is Hatlen!! Sure enough, I wrote this for a Point/Counterpoint column in 1996. ("Point/Counterpoint, Is Listening Literacy," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, vol. 90, pp. 173-175, 1996). I took that position because the other wasn't available. A man named Dean Tuttle wrote in support of listening being literacy. This is what he said:

*"Is listening literacy? As a blind person, my answer is a resounding yes! For me, much of each day is filled with auditory reading of Talking Books, email correspondence, news programs on a local radio reading service, and on-line databases at the library."*

I think Dean Tuttle makes his point very clearly, and I think that it's time for us, as educators of blind and visually impaired students, to strongly support the position that, for our students, literacy can be achieved through print, Braille, or through listening.

And so we have a task before us. We must redefine literacy for the students with whom we work. Our new definition must take into consideration a variety of ways to become literate. Of course, one is reading and writing print. Another is competence in reading and writing Braille. But then we enter a gray area, one that we must define. We must take into consideration the characteristics of the person in determining whether print alone, Braille alone, or a combination of the two alone, will achieve complete literacy for the blind or visually impaired person. The answer, according to Dean Tuttle, is a resounding "no." For Dean and most other blind persons, literacy through listening must be added. So I say to teachers and parents that the judicious use of recorded material you use with high school students is clearly a dimension of literacy for them.

And what about a deafblind student at TSBVI? What if she will not be a print or Braille reader, and will not learn through listening. Is she destined to be labeled illiterate? If you were the child's teacher or parent, I'll bet you wouldn't want this child to carry that stigma! Is signing a form of literacy? Are tactile symbols a form of literacy? Are calendar boxes a form of literacy? I propose to you that they all are, and because we have the creativity and flexibility to take into consideration the strengths and skills of each individual student, every child at TSBVI has the capacity to become literate, and the staff of TSBVI has the capability to teach literacy to every child!!

The other day I asked my secretary to find some definitions of literacy on the internet. She uncovered what I believe to be a very profound concept. At least it's profound to me, because I hadn't heard it before. There are literacy experts out there in the world who have developed the concept of "Media Literacy." Listen to this:

*"for 500 years, we've taught our children to read words. The time has come to teach them also to read the powerful **images and sounds of their multi-media world.**"*

Yes, all of us live in a multi-media world. A simple, but graphic, example are new textbooks being written for sighted students. They don't contain simple lines of print any more. There are colored words, italicized words, bold words, boxes, columns, pictures, graphics, and all sorts of variations that are intended to make the visual page more exciting to read. More than that, much of the learning experienced by sighted students using these books come from non-printed information.

As learned people have expanded "Print Literacy" to "Media Literacy," so also must we accept the concept that literacy encompasses far more than the ability to read and write print and/or Braille.

Is “illiterate” a dirty word? I think so. It is often used in a demeaning, prejudicial way. It closes doors. It stigmatizes. It labels. It serves no positive purpose to label a child as “illiterate”. But if we accept, adopt the traditional definition of “literacy”, then we have relegated many wonderful, talented, precious children to being illiterate.

While I believe there are many reasons to advocate for a broad definition of literacy, even perhaps embrace the concept of “media literacy”, perhaps the most persuasive reason is that no child at TSBVI will ever, ever, live under the stigma of being illiterate.

Now you know where I stand on the topic of literacy. Listen to this definition developed by the Center for Media Literacy:

***Media Literacy is a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms, from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.***

While there is nothing specific in this definition to suggest that it would cover a blind child with severe additional disabilities who uses tactile symbols and a calendar box for receptive and expressive communication, I maintain to you that this is simply because the authors don’t know the same children that I do.

What if I suggest to you that the definition of Media Literacy is the ability to communicate needs, thoughts, and responses, and receive information, through the effective utilization of remaining senses?

The founders and advocates of Media Literacy have something entirely different in mind. They view this as an expansion of print literacy, combining all sources for receiving and producing media in this high tech, electronic world. But I say we steal their term and give it our own meaning, and relegate every blind and visually impaired child to the level of Media Literacy through creative, systematic, and inspired instruction!!

I propose to you that we stop using the term “Literacy” and agree that the word must have a defining adjective preceding it. Let’s get used to using Print Literacy, Braille Literacy, Tactile Literacy, Auditory Literacy, or Media Literacy when describing the various paths that lead to a system to receive and give information.

I must share with you what I consider the down side of Media Literacy. I believe that modern textbook publishers have become experts at using multi-media in the production of textbooks. I have regular opportunities to review new textbook adoptions in Texas, with the task of evaluating formats to be used in transcribing them into Braille. It is ironic that, in these days of increasing inclusion of blind students into the regular classroom and curriculum, the instructional materials they receive are becoming ever more difficult to use. On a single print page, there are now side-bars, boxes, graphs, pictures, bolded words, colored words, words of all different sizes, some italicized, and charts. What was once a simple print page consisting of words written in uninterrupted lines has now become an exciting multi-media production for the sighted student. I’m sure there is data to support that these eye-catching books assist in the learning of sighted students. The book becomes similar to the multi-media world in which young people live today.

What do we do with the Braille version of these books? Well, we haven't yet discovered how to make Braille multi-media. Braille is Braille, designed to be read in a horizontal fashion across a page without interruption. Remember, the Braille reader knows little about the page except what has been read and is under the fingers.

I have seen some heroic and some misguided examples of how to present multi-media print material to the Braille reader. I know transcribers who, without the wise counsel of a teacher, have produced amazing replicas of the print book. I know what a stair-step chart is, and I have yet to figure out how a Braille reader is supposed to read it with understanding. Teachers and transcribers are doing the best they can, often demonstrating wonderful creativity. However, I suggest to you that these multi-media books, when transcribed into Braille, are infinitely more difficult to read.

I recently reviewed a primer, a very beginning reading book. In the print copy, key words were presented in color. The Braille copy used appropriate and approved transcription methods to indicate the colored words, making this beginning reader far more difficult for fingers that cannot easily "read over" anomalies among the letters.

Now, I don't begrudge our media literate sighted students these multi-media reading materials. But I can't help but worry about the Braille reader, sitting in a regular classroom, trying to figure out the layout of the transcribed page without the help of the TVI, who won't be there until next week!!

I also challenge you to explore ways in which to present multi-media books in Braille. You say to me "that's impossible," and I say to you that that is my first reaction, too. But we're a profession that doesn't use the word "impossible." Instead, we have been a profession that, for years, has discovered how to solve impossible tasks, how to use the creativity that permeates our profession, how to think so far out of the box that we amaze our friends and colleagues!

## Free Braille Books

Announcement from the Braille Institute of California

*Abstract: announcement from the Braille Institute of California that free braille books for children are available.*

*Key Words: blindness, Braille, Braille books, children, literacy*

The Braille Institute of California will provide age-appropriate Braille books to children for free. This is funded through their Special Collections and is available only for children. To request this service, call 1-800-BRAILLE (1-800-272-4553) and ask for Jackie (extension 1386) in the Press Department. You will then receive a catalog three times a year from which you can choose four braille books or one Dots for Tots Kit.

Teachers, librarians, and other professionals or interested nonprofessionals can also request the same service through the Partners in Literacy Program; however, the cost is \$150 per year.

More information is available on the website <[www.BrailleInstitute.org/Publishing/SpecialCollection.htm](http://www.BrailleInstitute.org/Publishing/SpecialCollection.htm)>.

## Hadley School for the Blind a Resource Worth Exploring

By Kate Moss, Education Specialist, Texas Deafblind Outreach

*Abstract: This article describes some of the programs offered by Hadley School for the Blind and explains eligibility requirements for completing distance education courses for credit.*

*Key Words: blind, deafblind, News & Views, Hadley School for the Blind, correspondence course, distance learning, Braille, child development, adjustment*

The Hadley School for the Blind was founded in 1920 by William Hadley, a man who lost his vision at the age of 55 towards the end of a lifetime of teaching school. He taught himself to read Braille and decided he could teach others. All of the course work is offered through distance education methods. In the past this was through mailed correspondence courses, but now includes some materials via the internet. There are more than 90 distance education courses available to eligible students completely free of charge. Students study in the comfort of their own home at a time that is convenient for them. Course materials arrive in the mail (a few are downloadable), and for students in the U.S. and Canada, instructors are just a toll-free call away.

All the information you need to begin a course of study with Hadley is contained at the Hadley web site <<http://www.hadley-school.org>>. Follow the “Programs” link to the course catalog, or call 1-800-323-4238 to obtain a Hadley course catalog in a variety of formats. Eligible students at Hadley include:

- blind adults (14+ years of age);
- relatives of a blind or visually impaired child;
- family members of a blind or visually impaired adult;
- professionals in the blindness field.

Hadley offers four educational programs: Adult Continuing Education; High School; Family Education; and Professional Education. The Adult Continuing Education Program and High School Program offers courses the following areas: Academic Studies; Braille and Other Communication Skills; Technology; Independent Living and Life Adjustment; and Recreation and Leisure Time. Adult Continuing Education students who are parents of blind children are eligible for courses in the Family Education Program.

The courses available include many history, science, math, and social studies courses. There is an interesting art history course called “Art History Through Touch and Sound: the Art of Ancient Egypt.” There are also many business related-courses in the areas of typing, verbal communication, computer literacy, abacus and business (e.g., Business Law, Small Business Management, and Introduction to Personal Financial Planning). Independent living and life adjustment courses, including topics such as The Human Eye, Introduction to Low Vision, Personal Psychology, Personal Safety: Self-Defense Strategies, and Self-Help Groups, are also available. Other distance courses include Bible Studies, Basic Conversational French and Spanish, Braille courses and Braille Music Notation, and Recreation courses such as Chess, Container Gardening and On the Move in the Great Outdoors. There is also a coursework series on Food and Parenting.

The Family Education Program focuses on independent living, technology, advocacy and adjustment to blindness issues. While some of the courses were written for adults who are blind or severely visually impaired, they also contain important information for family members. Other courses have been developed specifically for family members. A listing of these courses includes:

- Early Childhood
- Reach Out and Teach

- Learning Through Play
- Child Development: Early Childhood
- Early Independence
- Finding Your Way: Activity Handbook for Elementary School-Aged Children
- Raising Responsible Children
- Braille Instruction, Introduction to Braille, and Contracted Braille
- Abacus 1 and Abacus 2
- Access Technology: Beginnings
- Accessing Local Sports and Recreation Programs
- College Bound: Supporting Your Child's Transition to the American University
- The Human Eye
- Independent Living
- Introduction to Low Vision
- Self-esteem and Adjusting with Blindness
- Self-Help Groups: An Introduction and Self-Help Groups Advanced Topics
- Social Skills: Foundation, Social Skills: Preschool Year, and Social Skills: Elementary Years
- Using Raised Markers
- You, Your Eyes and Your Diabetes

The Professional Education Program is available to a professional or paraprofessional in the field of blindness or visual impairments. These courses, which include many of those already mentioned and the Essentials of Nemeth, are intended to help you become familiar with Hadley's distance education programs, sharpen your own skills, and provide the necessary support as your student/client adjusts to blindness.

Go online, phone (800-323-4238) or request information by snail mail (700 Elm Street, Winnetka, Illinois 60093 – 2554). You will see that Hadley School is definitely a resource worth exploring.

## **CEC Award Received by Dr. Phil Hatlen**

By Cyral Miller, Director of Outreach, TSBVI, Austin, TX

*Abstract: This article describes the Outstanding Leadership Award Dr. Hatlen has received from the Council for Exceptional Children*

*Key Words: News & Views, Phil Hatlen, award, CEC*

Dr. Phil Hatlen, Superintendent of the TSBVI, was selected by the national Council for Exceptional Children to receive the 2004 CEC Outstanding Leadership Award. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. Nominees for this award were nominated from all areas of special education. Winners must have made a significant contribution to the Council's programs and activities at the local, state/provincial, national and/or international level over an extended period of time. Dr. Hatlen's "commitment and exemplary performance in serving children and youth with exceptionalities" won him this prestigious award. Congratulations, Phil!

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Mail or e-mail your new classified to Carolyn Perkins:

TSBVI Outreach, 1100 West 45th St., Austin, TX 78756, or <carolynperkins@tsbvi.edu>.

An up-to-date Statewide Staff Development Calendar is posted on TSBVI's website at <www.tsbvi.edu>

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## **Texas Focus 2004: The Itinerant VI Professional**

**June 10 & 11, 2004  
Wyndham Dallas North  
Intersection Dallas North Tollway & I-635  
Dallas, Texas**

Most students with visual impairments in Texas are served by itinerant VI teachers and O&M specialists. What skills does an itinerant professional need? How can the itinerant professional meet the various needs of students with visual impairments? Keynote speaker Jean Olmstead, teacher for students with visual impairments, orientation and mobility specialist, and author of *Itinerant Teaching: Tricks of the Trade for Teachers of Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*, will address these and other questions.

Other sessions will include:

- collaboration strategies
- the transition process
- collaboration to serve students with low vision
- effective partnerships with ECI
- teaching daily living skills
- what is a quality program?
- creating an expanded core curriculum camp
- providing a sensory diet for students with multiple impairments
- organization tips for the itinerant VI professional

Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (TAPVI) will hold its 1st Annual Meeting in conjunction with Texas Focus 2004. We will present a summary of the progress and accomplishments for the organization. Join us for a lively exchange of ideas on the future of TAPVI. We will hold annual meetings at every Texas Focus.

*For More information, contact:*

Jim Durkel at (512) 206-9270 or Jimdurkel@tsbvi.edu, or  
Melinda Lucas at (512) 206-9344

## **A Texas Focus Preconference Event**

### **Making a Clean Sweep: Daily Living Skills for Students with Visual Impairments**

Presented by Shelia Dahm, RTC  
June 9, 2004 , 9AM to 4 PM , Wyndham Dallas North

Daily living skills consist of all the tasks and functions people perform, in accordance with their abilities, in order to lead lives as independently as possible. These needs are varied, as they include skills in personal hygiene, food preparation, money management, time monitoring, organization, etc. The skills and knowledge that sighted students acquire by casually and incidentally observing and interacting with their environment are often difficult, if not impossible, for blind and visually impaired students to learn without direct, sequential instruction by knowledgeable persons.

*For More information, contact:*

Jim Durkel at (512) 206-9270 <Jimdurkel@tsbvi.edu>, or Melinda Lucas at (512) 206-9344

### **Helen Keller National Center National Training Team**

May 16 – 21, 2004 – Orientation & Mobility Techniques for Deaf-Blind Travelers

June 14 – 18, 2004 – Employment: The Ultimate Goal (for Employment Training Specialists)

September 13 – 17, 2004 – Enhancing Services for Older Adults With Vision and Hearing Loss

October 18 – 22, 2004 – Imagine the Possibilities: Person Centered Approach to Habilitation

November 15 – 19, 2004 – Expanding the Arena: The Magic of Technology

Cost of week long seminars at Helen Keller National Center - Sands Point, NY - \$350  
(includes lodging, meals, training, and training manual)

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; FAX: (516) 944-7302  
TTY: (516) 944-8637  
e-mail: <ntthknc@aol.com>  
Visit our website: <www.hknc.org>

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**The 22nd National  
Cornelia de Lange Syndrome  
Conference  
June 24-27**

**Oak Brook, Illinois**

Chicago Marriott Hotel  
Contact: CdLS Foundation  
<[http://www.cdlsusa.org/news/Conference\\_info.pdf](http://www.cdlsusa.org/news/Conference_info.pdf)>

**Children's Craniofacial Association  
Family Retreat  
June 24-27**

**Tempe, Arizona**

Contact: Jana Butera  
1-800-535-3643 or <[jbutera@ccakids.com](mailto:jbutera@ccakids.com)>

**The 2004 FOCUS Families  
ONH/SOD Conference  
June 24-27**

**Kansas City, Missouri**

Embassy Suites Hotel,  
7640 NW Tiffany Springs Parkway  
Presenters: Mark Borchert, M.D.,  
Campbell Thompson, PhD.  
Fee: \$30 Professional; \$35 per family (limit 5)  
\$10 each additional person  
Contact: 1-866-362-875

**Moebius Syndrome Conference  
July 9, 10 & 11, 2004**

**Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas**

For information:  
email to <[txmoebiu@flash.net](mailto:txmoebiu@flash.net)> ,  
or visit <<http://www.moebius syndrome.com/2004/texas2004.htm>>

**AER 2004 Biennial  
International Conference  
AER--Where Dreams Come True  
July 13-18**

**The Hilton  
in the Walt Disney World Resort**

1751 Hotel Plaza Boulevard  
Lake Buena Vista, Florida

SPECIAL ROOM RATE:  
AER group rate of \$115 plus tax  
for a single or a double!  
When making reservations,  
call 800-782-4414 or 407-827-4000  
and ask for the AER rate.  
Registration Information: Barbara Sherr  
Ph: 877-492-2708 or 703-671-4500

**NAPVI/FFCVI National Conference  
Hosted by AER**

(The Association for Education and Rehabilitation  
for the Blind and Visually Impaired)

**July 15-17, 2004**

**The Hilton  
in Walt Disney World Resort**

1751 Hotel Plaza Boulevard  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

SPECIAL ROOM RATE:  
AER group rate of \$115 plus tax  
for a single or a double!  
When making reservations,  
call 800-782-4414 or 407-827-4000  
and ask for the AER rate.

for more information, including the conference  
program and registration form:  
<[www.AERBVI.org](http://www.AERBVI.org)>

**Statewide  
Conference on Education  
of the Deaf**

**July 26-28, 2004**

**Fort Worth, TX**

**Renaissance Worthington Hotel**

Contact:  
Ruth Hicks  
281-634-1543  
<ruth.hicks@fortbend.k12.tx.us>  
for registration info

**Best Practices in Teaching  
Students with Low Functioning  
Autism and Pervasive  
Development Disorders**

**July 26-30, 2004**

**Advanced Practices in Teaching  
Students with Autism  
Spectrum Disorders**

**August 2-6, 2004**

**San Marcos, Texas**  
The Meeting Place,  
400 C.M. Allen Parkway

Each workshop:  
Registration fee \$495, only 60 spaces  
Contact: 512-461-1298

**Virginia Murray Sowell Center  
Distinguished Lecturer Series**

**Michael Collins**

Director, Hilton/Perkins Program  
Perkins School for the Blind,

**Louis Tutt**

Principal, Colorado School for the  
Deaf and the Blind

***Transition Strategies for Students  
with Deafblindness:  
Living, Work, and Leisure***

**September 17 & 18**

**Texas Tech University**

College of Education, Room 001  
Lubbock, Texas

Contact: Dr. Roseanna Davidson  
806-742-1997, ext. 246

**SWOMA 2004**

**October 29-30, 2004**

Greene Family Camp, Bruceville, Texas  
(Waco area)

Theme: recreation, leisure, and sports skills

Registration materials  
will be available in early August

**2005 Texas Symposium on  
Deafblindness**

Preliminary Date: Feb. 18-19, 2005  
Austin, TX

Mark your calendars, and look for details  
in the next *See/Hear*.

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# SEE/HEAR

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**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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March 1st for the Spring edition

June 1st for the Summer edition

September 1st for the Fall edition

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