



Sense Abilities

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

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Kathleen Sheriff's son Chris, who has CHARGE Syndrome, attends Sam Houston State University. Read what she has to say about Chris' experiences in "Family Wisdom" starting on page 4.

College Advice

By Jose A. Z. Martinez

College Graduate, Texas State University at San Marcos

Abstract: A college graduate shares his tips on being a successful college student.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, blind, college, self-determination

When you make the decision to attend college as a blind student, you may feel as if it is going to be over whelming. And not just because of the class work, but you may find yourself asking, "how am I going to do this?" This question is not uncommon for a decision of this magnitude. I attended Texas State University at San Marcos and graduated with a public relations major. Prior to going off to college, I had very few opportunities to prepare myself for what was coming. But I attended college prep classes and also talked to current blind college students. I took what I learned and applied it, learning other important information along the way.

In today's world it is very difficult to function without knowledge of technology, and college is no different. So it is very important to focus on learning the screen reader and notetaker of your choice. It is always smart to have a reliable way of taking notes just in case your technology fails, such as Braille. So being efficient with the slate and stylus may be an option. Professors expect the work to be done on time, so being prepared is important.

Once you choose your preferred school, one of the first things you should do is familiarize yourself with the campus, either by going to the campus before classes start and learning the layout on your own, or getting some O&M lessons facilitated through your DARS counselor. If you can do both, that would be very beneficial. This way you can learn the different buildings where your classes are going to be as well as important landmarks like the library and student center. There is nothing like knowing exactly where you are headed on the first day of school to help with the anxiety of a new campus environment. If you are at a University it may be difficult to learn the whole campus with a couple of O&M lessons, but you should learn enough information about the layout to help you build on what you know for future semesters.

Once you have a firm grasp on the layout of the campus and where your classes are going to be that semester, you should then approach your professors to talk about the course work and also to address any concerns that they may have about a blind student being in their class. Although technically the professor can not stop you from taking the class, it is a good idea to talk to them and see if there needs to be any adaptations in order for you to get the most out of the class. Also, remember the professors have control of your course grades, so it's best to be on the same page with them at all times to avoid any misunderstandings.

Another important situation to be prepared for is searching for a reader to assist you in completing class assignments that you are not able to access. You can advertise for the reader position in the university's newspaper, or you can work with the professor and advertise for the reader in that particular class. If you choose the second option, you may have better luck, because the individual would have the same reading assignments as you. There are other forms of advertising for the reader position that you can utilize aside from the ones mentioned above, such as bulletin boards,

facebook, disability offices, and even word of mouth, just to name a few. As far as choosing the best candidate, that is a personal choice, but make sure you pick someone who will be professional, reliable, and will be of help. If you generate a lot of interest, be prepared to go through an interview process to weed out individuals that may not be what you are looking for. Having a reader may not always be necessary, but if you are planning to get one for a class, make sure to talk to your DARS counselor about the process and regulations that need to be followed for using reader services.

After your academic situation is in place, you should look for groups or student organizations to join. There are many different organizations, and always something for all tastes. You can find a list of current student organizations on the university's home Web page. This would be a great opportunity to meet and get to know students with the same interests as your own. The social atmosphere of college life is a once in a lifetime experience and you should enjoy it.

Attending college is not for everyone, but if you feel college would benefit you in accomplishing your long-term goals, there is no reason why you should let blindness stop you from getting there!

CHARGE, Charged, and Charging Forward: Post Secondary Transitions for Our Son with CHARGE Syndrome

By L. Kathleen Sheriff, Parent and Texas A&M University Educational Psychology Graduate Student, Willis, TX

Abstract: Transition from high school to college can be a challenge for students with disabilities, particularly for students with multiple sensory disabilities. A mother shares the journey of her son with CHARGE syndrome excelling at the challenge of meshing medical fragility with his sensory disabilities to achieve academic success and independent living at Sam Houston State University.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, deafblind, transition, independent living, college, CHARGE Syndrome

I never dreamed I would see the day Chris would enroll in college, but I always planned his education as if he would attend post-secondary schooling. Early on in Chris' life I noticed he had intelligence, but he was years behind his peers socially and academically due to his multiple

congenital disabilities. He was born with CHARGE Syndrome even though we did not know that in 1982. We only knew he had multiple congenital anomalies presenting him with major health challenges. Education was always secondary to his health-related concerns. It has been a delight to watch him grow developmentally, academically, and socially since entering college several years ago. He is now a junior at Sam Houston State University, majoring in Technical Theatre. This is the story of Chris' courageous series of transitions from high school to his current independence as a student at SHSU in Huntsville, Texas.

Chris graduated from Klein Forest High School in Houston, Texas in 2002. What a celebration we had! Seventy-five people graced our doorstep to say congratulations to him and place money on his money tree (a silk decorator tree) in our den. Chris placed a sign on the tree that stated, "Dad, you said I'd graduate when money grew on trees! Hang your money here." Everyone who saw the sign laughed and then as Chris expected, hung bills and checks on the tree. When asked at that time what he wanted to do, he stated he wanted to attend community college at Tomball College taking classes leading to a paraprofessional certificate. His goal was to assist in the local deaf education coop. Advocating and charged with excitement, he enrolled in a certificate program at Tomball College.

During his first year post-high school, Chris volunteered in a public special education preschool class several days a week while he attended classes at Tomball College. He lived at home, and my husband Steve drove him to his college classes and to volunteer at the elementary School, since Chris can not drive due to his vision and hearing disabilities. Chris attended this same school as a preschooler. Though he could speak orally as a young adult, he was able to use his first language, sign language, with the students. The special education teachers Chris volunteered with befriended him and welcomed him into their classrooms. They were very supportive and trained him in workplace social skills while on their campus.

Recognizing a need for a college study group, Chris and several classmates met to help each other with class assignments. I read his texts with him and listened as he read to me. I shared scenarios from my classroom and sometimes allowed Chris to volunteer there. He connected the material he was learning in college with the programming he was a part of in his volunteer preschool class. The next thing I knew he was volunteering to

teach typical preschool children at our church on Sunday mornings. He was definitely charging forward toward his goal of working with children in our local community. Chris completed his certificate program, but was not offered a position to work for the district where he volunteered. I was disappointed for him because I knew he had worked very hard and wanted to be a paraprofessional in a preschool classroom.

Chris' best friend Jay came by to visit during his Fall 2003 holiday break from Texas State Technical College in Waco, Texas. Jay convinced Chris he could be successful at TSTC. He also told him about a staff member at TSTC who helped students with accommodations. I arranged for a campus visit, even though my main concern was the three hour distance Chris would be from us if he enrolled there. Chris did enroll at TSTC where Jay was, moved into the dorm next to the office area, bought books, and began classes in January of 2004.

His first schedule consisted of technology courses combined with developmental courses in reading, writing, and math. Steve and I drove to Waco every 10 days to check on Chris, bring medication, shop, and pick him up for medical visits in Houston, though we located an excellent cardiologist in Waco to monitor his aortic valve replacement. His counselor handled modifications for classes, and the dorm staff looked after him. The campus nurse had him come to clinic regularly for blood pressure checkups, and to just chat with him about his health and diet. He ate in the dorm and kept food in a small refrigerator in his room. He had the internet and a cell phone for contact with us. The laundry was across the hall from his room. Maintenance staff put a light switch door bell in his room, so a light flashed to tell him someone was at his door in case he could not hear the bell. He rode a church van to a local church on Sundays and became active in a college ministry. These friends began to pick Chris up for Bible studies and parties. Chris introduced them to us, and we attended several church services with him so we knew who to contact if he had a need before we could get to him in Waco.

The third semester Chris attended TSTC, he and a friend rented a small house. The friend agreed to cook meals and drive Chris as needed in exchange for free rent. One evening, Chris cooked a frozen pizza himself and left the gas oven on. Symptoms of CHARGE syndrome for Chris include a lack of the senses of smell and taste. When his roommate arrived

home, Chris was very ill due to gas in the house. We drove to Waco, where his roommate had helped him survive the evening by taking him for medical care. He recognized he needed to be closer to home, and we *absolutely* did. Chris loved TSTC, but the drive was exhausting for us, and after three successful semesters there he felt ready to transition and charge forward to a four year school.

Chris had good grades at TSTC and applied to Sam Houston State in 2006. He was accepted, and moved into an apartment with his sister Amy who was a student at SHSU. The counseling center helped with class modifications, and the medical center monitored his medical needs and contacted his Houston cardiologist for him. Amy cooked meals and drove



Chris wherever he needed to go. Slowly, he began to learn to cook. Yes, the stove was electric this time. He joined a local church behind his apartment complex and walked there for college ministry activities. Amy eventually left SHSU, and Chris moved into his own efficiency apartment alone in Huntsville in 2007. He walked to classes and church friends or theatre classmates drove him places when weather warranted. Steve and I attended church with him on Sunday mornings and met his friends and the staff there. Once again, he had made friends with adults who respect and admire his drive toward independence, and were willing to participate in helping him achieve it.

After Chris suffered a stroke in Huntsville, Steve and I moved from Houston to near Huntsville in order to be near him. In Spring, 2008, Chris had a serious surgery and returned home for six months to recuperate. He returned to his own apartment just a few months ago to charge forward once again, living independently. His apartment amenities include a van for transportation, a washer/dryer in each apartment, a large flat screen television, and free internet service. What more could a guy need, right?

Steve returned to college and now attends classes at SHSU. He and Chris have lunch together several times a week, we attend his church several times a month with him, and I clean his apartment with him twice a month.

He is learning to cook simple meals and finds he enjoys using a crock pot to make dishes that last for several days. He does his own laundry in his apartment. I still tutor Chris regularly, and he knows to give me advance notice when he needs help with assignments. Quite often the only help he needs is with inferential writing and new vocabulary. Steve and I still help manage his finances since he lives on his disability money, college grants, and college loans. He is learning to manage credit cards and balance a checkbook.

Chris recently openly shared that he is aware he will always need to live close to family. His current plan is to graduate from SHSU and work for his older brother Nate, who is an assistant producer for a theatre in London, England. Nate says he welcomes that day. His younger brother Patrick lives in New York City, and has also offered for Chris to live and work for a theatre there near him. We are proud of Chris' tenacity and honored to be related to him. Our family is charged and charging forward to help Chris transition into the independent man he desires to be with his own opportunity for living life to the fullest.

**Untangling the Threads:
When a Blind Child has Additional Disabilities**

by Rene Harrell, parent

Reprinted with permission from *Future Reflections*, Fall 2007

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Abstract: A parent posts her thoughts about raising a child who is blind with additional disabilities. She reflects on how her own expectations impact her child's learning.

Keywords: blind, children, parenting, NFB, disabilities

Future Reflections editor's note: Some great conversation threads appear on the <blindkid@nfbnet.org> listserver sponsored by the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. Occasionally, parts of those conversations have enough substance, detail, and insight to stand alone. Such is the case with the remarks below by Colorado mother, Rene Harrell. Here is Harrell as she describes her struggles to untangle the threads of cause-and-effect for her child who has multiple disabilities:

From: Rene Harrell

To: NFBnet Blind Kid Mailing List, (for parents of blind children)
<blindkid@nfbnet.org>

Sent: Thursday, June 14, 2007

Subject: Re: What do you REALLY believe about blindness?

This is a great conversation. I'm so glad to see this on here, because I've actually been thinking about this a lot lately.

Our daughter has multiple disabilities, which had made untangling the threads of "why" she can't do certain things hard for us as her parents. Why wasn't she verbally on par with her peers? Why the certain persevering play behaviors? Why was she lagging in certain motor skills?

She is adopted and came home to us at the age of four, so we also had the transition from her foster home to a whole new country and new language to throw into the mix.

I haven't had the chance to attend any NFB events, though I would dearly love to make it to a national convention. As of yet, we've never had the opportunity to meet any other children who are blind. I've struggled to figure out what is a blindness issue, what is a mental retardation issue, what is an autism issue, and what is just unique to Clare. But this list has been a wonderful resource, and two beliefs have really anchored me in this journey:

1. Blind children should have the capacity to achieve on par with their peers. In Clare's case, this means that she has the capacity to achieve on par with children who share her other disabilities but are sighted; and
2. Our job as her parents is to encourage and foster every milestone of independence that she has the capacity to achieve.

Truly believing these two things has been a transformative process for me. I can't say I always believed them in my core. I'd dress her and change her and put on her shoes and always have her hold my hand; and we never made any steps towards anything more. And then, when we really started to believe in these two core principles, we began to expect more out of Clare. Since her developmental and cognitive age hovers around age two, I took a good hard look at my two-year-old son and started taking stock—and started to push.

Clare will be six in September and is only now beginning to talk. She has a vocabulary of about fifty words. But with a little assistance, she is now dressing and undressing herself. She is not potty trained but she can take off her diaper, put on a new one, and then wash her hands with just a little prompting (obviously these are the “clean” diaper changes). She can brush her teeth and her hair. She can feed herself with a spoon and a fork. She can navigate our house. Now when we go to the playground, I take her on a tour to show her where all the equipment is and then push her to do it herself.

She initially fought every single one of these pushes. (Whew! We had some major meltdowns of disappointment and frustration.) But then we got the wonderful chance to stand back, watch her blossom, and see the pride she has in herself when she finds she can achieve. Each time she’s risen to reach a new expectation, it’s shown us that we will never know her true capacity unless we are stretching her to grow. And we gain more and more confidence to challenge her when we see the positive results that come from encouraging her to figure out how she can do things for herself instead of needing things done for her.

She rides a tricycle now, and she is playing T-ball in the three-year-old league with her brother at the local YMCA, as it is her cognitive age. (We didn’t tell them she was blind.) We’ve shown her where the T is, how to figure out where the ball is on the T, and how to swing the bat. The only help we give her is to have someone at the bases shouting so she knows where to run, and they have to do that for all the kids anyway. She’s in gymnastics with peers her own age (either her dad or I stay with her to help her follow directions).

Each time a new task comes up, I ask myself how much of this can she do on her own? We are now working on different fasteners, such as buttons, zippers, laces, etc. She can’t zipper entirely on her own, but if I get it started, she can pull it up the whole way. She can’t buckle herself in her car seat, but if I thread the top fastener together and tell her to “push,” then she can click it in on her own.

I’m probably rambling incoherently right now, but this listserver has really challenged me to reframe how I think about blindness in light of my daughter’s other disabilities. I always thought I had a positive attitude about what blind people could achieve, until I was confronted with a child who

seemed so incapable of doing absolutely anything. And “blame it on blindness” syndrome runs so rampant that it was hard not to get sucked into believing that everything she couldn’t do was because she was blind.

We had one doctor, God bless her, who finally looked me in the eye and said flat out, “There is nothing about blindness that would prevent your daughter from talking and don’t believe anyone who says that.” This really kick-started us to begin forcefully advocating against those who want to blame blindness for our daughter’s other challenges in life. And since then, her quality of life has dramatically increased.

So THANK YOU all on this listserver, because you’ve been such an encouragement!

A Well Planned Move

By Myra Medina, Family Specialist, California Deaf Blind Services
Reprinted with permission from *reSources*, Fall 2004, a publication of California Deaf-Blind Services. To view this article as well as other issues of *reSources*, go to <<http://www.sfsu.edu/~cadbs/News.html>>

Abstract: A parent describes how she prepared her family before moving into a new house in another community. The steps she took resulted in a smooth transition for her child with deafblindness.

Keywords: family wisdom, transitioning children with special needs, deafblind, multiple disabilities, cultural competence

Many years ago when I left Mexico to come and live in the United States, the move happened so suddenly that I didn’t stop to think about what it implied. It was during Christmas vacation and the worst part was that I wasn’t aware I would be leaving so soon. I did not even have time to say goodbye to my classmates and friends. I arrived here to a totally different place—a different culture, a different language, and different people. It was very traumatic and scary, and I felt anxious trying to adjust to my new environment.

A couple of years ago I made another change in my life— my family and I moved from Los Angeles to Riverside, which is about 50 miles to the east of L.A. When we were looking for the house it never occurred to me that this would be a big change for my kids, especially for Norman, my 8-year-old

who is deaf-blind and has multiple disabilities. Right after we found the house we wanted and knew exactly where we were going to live, I suddenly remembered all that I had been through years ago when I came to the U.S. Deep down in my heart I was concerned about Norman; because of all of his special needs this move was very likely to have a great impact on him.

Keeping in mind the fact that the move would be a challenge, my husband and I started to plan a transition to make things easier for Norman. We knew there were factors working against us like timing and distance (timing because it was during school session, and distance because the new house wasn't around the corner from our old house but instead many miles away). Nevertheless, we were excited about the move.



When designing our transition plan we considered all the factors involved, such as home environment, school for our daughter, school program for Norman, etc. We then asked ourselves, How can we do this? How can we make sure this transition works? And the big question—How can we make sure Norman's new school program is the right one for him?

First, we did not move right away to our new house. We decided to have Norman stay in his old program for the remainder of the school year (since it was almost vacation) in order to minimize the number of changes in his life. We thought this might make him confused with so many things happening at the same time. We chose instead to visit our new home as often as possible. We even spent some weekends at our new place, exploring and getting familiar with the new home, the neighborhood, and we also visited the new school.

Soon after, I visited the new school program and met the person who would be Norman's new teacher. I explained to her all about Norman's needs and asked how she felt about having a child with deaf-blindness in her class. I inquired all about other related services, and the possibility of meeting with the one-to-one assistant before school started. The next step was to take Norman to the classroom so he could meet his new teacher and she could meet him.

When the school year started, I went with Norman to school for the first few days. Even though we had all met before, everything was kind of new for Norman as well as for his teacher and one-on-one aide. Me being there in the classroom and showing the school staff how to communicate and work with Norman made everything much easier. Norman didn't feel that I had just left him there and the teacher didn't feel so lost. Shortly after that, his educational team and I met to discuss all the information related to Norman. Thinking about what was best for our children—along with all the planning, time, and effort—made this transition a success. We finally moved into our new home. Norman is progressing in his new program without any major complications. In addition, our daughter likes her new school, too. And they even got a dog named Buster.

Albinism Group Forms in North Texas

By Cyd Frazier, Founder of the North Texas Albinism Community

Abstract: A parent of a child with albinism tells why and how she began an albinism group in North Texas.

Keywords: visually impaired, albinism, low vision

On November 21, 2005, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy named Grayson Guy Frazier. He was born with Oculocutaneous Albinism Type 1 (OCA1)—big words that basically mean he is lacking pigment in his skin, hair, and eyes. He has an acute sensitivity to light as well as low vision. We see a pediatric ophthalmologist, genetics doctor, dermatologist, and vision therapist on a regular basis. Already my baby has had a four-muscle eye surgery and will be undergoing another eye surgery in the next coming months. Albinism is genetically recessive, thus making it rare—1 in 17,000 people have some form of the condition. And Hollywood seems to portray every individual with albinism in a sinister and evil light.

After a few years of trying to cope and reach out for help, my husband and I joined a national organization called NOAH—the National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation. In October 2008, I called the NOAH headquarters and asked them if they had a local chapter in Texas that my family could join. I was told that none existed, which instantly prompted me to ask, “Well, how can I change that?”

I realized that when there is a need in a community, action speaks louder than words. I went straight to work to organize an albinism community in North Texas. I contacted the local Lion's Club who generously agreed to donate their facility for our meeting at no cost and NOAH sent out my invitations to members in the area through the mail and e-mail. I also asked my son's doctors, caseworkers, and therapists to help spread the word. A few weeks, phone calls, and e-mails later, I had effectively put together an initial meeting for a local albinism community. As a mother of a young son with OCA1, I realized how much I needed local support. I quickly found out that I was not alone.

The response from my invitation surpassed my expectations. Everyone that contacted me was excited about the prospect of a local albinism community, and attended the initial meeting on November 2, 2008 with high hopes. Everyone wanted to pitch in and make this dream a reality. It seems that all my efforts paid off in spades.

Reaching out to others with albinism and meeting other parents whose children share my son's condition has made all the difference in the world for me and my family. We have a support group now. We have people to talk to that understand how we feel and the challenges we face. We now have a community on which to lean.

I want to invite others to join us. We are planning a Bowl-a-Thon in February and a mini conference in the summer of 2009. You can contact us through our Yahoo Group at: <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dfwalbinism>>. You can also e-mail me directly at <gccfrazier@yahoo.com>. We hope to hear from you soon!

TAPVI TALKS

By Michele Chauvin, President of TAPVI, Sugar Land, TX

Abstract: The Texas Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments shares their experience speaking before the State Board of Educator Certification in October and provides an update on their organization's business.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, blind, visually impaired, family organization, CTVI, SBEC, teacher certification



In October 2008, the Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (TAPVI) had the opportunity to speak before the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) in

Austin. As a mom, I shared my plea that the board should require a Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (CTVI) to receive specialized training, including coursework and a supervised internship, before earning this certification. Currently, Texas law only requires that teachers pass an exam to become certified in any additional subjects, including CTVIs. A student who is the son of a TAPVI member also gave a personal account about the role his CTVI plays in his life. What a proud moment for his family!

These were among the statements for Item 11: Consideration and Opportunity to Approve the Recommendation that A Visually Impaired Teacher Take Visually Impaired Training in Addition to Examination as a Requirement for Visually Impaired Certification.

MICHELE'S TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Michele Chauvin, and I live in Sugar Land. I am the President of the Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, and I have a 7-year-old daughter, who is blind. Like most Texas students who are visually impaired, she has attended public school in our community of Fort Bend ISD. Over the years, she has worked with 5 different Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired. We have observed a variety of educational methods based on their training. It is imperative for VI Teachers to have the knowledge and experience provided by a complete training program to work successfully in this specialized field.

Like the conductor of a complex symphony, the VI teacher coordinates lesson plans between numerous teachers. Adapting materials for every assignment on a daily basis is complicated to say the least. A typical lesson plan may include a raised line drawing, a tactile picture, a real-life experience, Braille, large print, complex technology, or all of the above. Everyone in a public school relies heavily on the VI teacher for guidance, from the principal to the volunteers. If the VI teacher lacks expertise, everyone suffers the consequences of an unprepared blind person, who may be missing skills necessary for independence.

VI teachers are also responsible for several assessments. The results often have far reaching impact into a child's future, possibly adding additional eligibilities, as 70% of VI students also have multiple impairments. Texas Administrative Code §89.1040 requires that schools must include a certified VI teacher when doing evaluations. It would be prudent to have a thoroughly trained VI teacher to conduct or collaborate on such important assessments. As the President of a statewide parent organization, I have met many VI families across Texas. A common concern for these families is the unique educational needs of our children. Our VI teacher is often our lifeline. A teacher without complete training or experience may steer a community in the wrong direction. These parents may give up on the public school system and decide to educate their child in a private or home school setting, rather than work with someone they view as incapable. Sadly, these families often lose the support they expected from the public school system. They simply want to send their kids to school, confident they are educated appropriately every day.

Proficiency in the vision field cannot be learned by passing an exam. This wealth of knowledge is acquired through specific training, experience working with VI students in a supervised setting, mentoring and continuing education. Please consider requiring teachers to complete their training before receiving their certification as a VI teacher in Texas. This will better equip our VI teachers to instruct a variety of VI students, families, and school systems regarding the specialized needs of this unique population. Thank you for your time.

COOPER'S TESTIMONY

Hello, my name is Cooper Alexander; I'm 13 and an 8th grader at Valley View ISD in Valley View, Texas. I'm here, away from my school to speak to you about how important my teacher of the visually impaired is to me.

When I was born I was too early and didn't weigh even two pounds. A month later I had bacterial meningitis and almost died. Because of that, I have an eye condition called Cortical Visual Impairment, or CVI, and mild cerebral palsy. I see light and dark, some colors, and sometimes shapes. Sometimes, I see less, sometimes more, it changes depending on my health, surroundings, and stress levels. I can walk pretty well, but I fall a lot if I'm not careful. I use a white cane to navigate my school and when I'm out running around.

My mom found out about ECI when I was 2 months old, because they told her at the hospital I would be blind, have cerebral palsy, and mental retardation. As you can see, I'm pretty smart and this is why: she has told me she and Dad were desperate to find some way to help me. ECI sent out Mary Ann Foster to look me over and decide how best to start. From the time I was 6 months old, Miss Mary Ann has looked out for me. I don't remember any of the early stuff, but Mom said she did lots of vision stimulation activities with me and tried to help me interact with my surroundings. I know she must have helped because I'm an all A student now.

It's hard to tell you in this short a time what Miss Mary Ann does for me each day, but I'll try. She started me on Braille by the time I was 3. Because I am a Braille student, she has to see me at my school a lot. By 1st grade I had a type of Braille note-taker and all my books were brailled. By 3rd grade, she made sure I was reading contracted Braille so I wouldn't fall behind the other kids. Now, she makes sure I have audio textbooks as well as the Braille, because there is a lot of reading! In 2nd grade she started teaching me Nemeth Code for math. It's a special Braille code just for advanced math, and it's hard. She gets me the technology I need to succeed in my classroom. I have a Braille note-taker that I write on and read from, a screen reader for my computer and tons more equipment she had to know how to teach me.

She has teacher worksheets brailled for me, math papers fixed so I can feel the diagrams or shapes so they make sense to me. Once, I needed the elements chart and she made sure I had it early, so I could start memorizing them. If we use maps, she makes sure I have them and in art class she helps the teacher understand what would be a good way to teach me. Miss Mary Ann sits with me in math and science sometimes, because it's easy for the classroom teacher to forget I need more description, or because there are changes that need to be made at the last minute so I can understand the lesson. That happens all the time, and she always knows how to help me. She takes a lot of classes at Region XI and X so she will know what might help me.

On top of all of that, even when she's seen me hundreds of times that month, she will take me to an event like Sports Extravaganza or a Mentor night at the American Foundation for the Blind center in Dallas because she

wants me to be an independent, regular kid. She say's that means I have to go to college and get a good job.

If Miss Mary Ann had not learned Braille, or Nemeth code I wouldn't have gone to Space Camp a couple of years ago, be the president of my 4-H club or be here talking to you, because I couldn't do the work. All kids deserve a great teacher like her, and we shouldn't give them anything less. Please make sure all teachers of visually impaired students get the training they need to help kids like me. Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

TAPVI.ORG Website Is Parked!

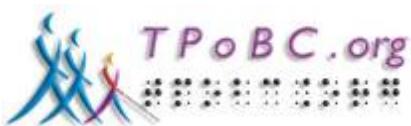
If you have tried to visit our website lately, you found that the site was not working. Our website is temporarily parked. We own the domain (name), but the company who hosts the space wants us to change our site builder, re-entering all our info, and is increasing the rates. Our Webmaster is looking into this issue. Hopefully, the site will be back up soon. We have had this website for a few years, and we intend to keep it.

Texas Parents of Blind Children – Growing and Changing

By Laura Weber, Texas Parents of Blind Children Vice President

Abstract: The Texas Parents of Blind Children (TBOBC) shares recent board elections and the focus of the organization.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, family organization, National Federation of the Blind, state chapter



When TPOBC formed in the fall of 2006, I was honored to be elected as the first president. I have really enjoyed leading the group for the past two years, but I recently decided that I would not run for president this year. I am so proud of all that TPOBC has accomplished, and I want it to continue to grow.

I am pleased to announce the new Texas Parents of Blind Children (TPOBC) Board, which was elected November 1, 2008 at the NFB-Texas State Convention in Dallas:

President – Kim Cunningham

Vice President – Laura Weber

Secretary – Lety Flores

Treasurer – Sally Thomas

Board Member – Dan Sturgill

Advisors – Tommy Craig, Angela Wolf, Emily Gibbs

I think that changing leadership in a group strengthens it and keeps it from becoming stagnant. I will miss leading this awesome board, but I can't think of a better person to take over than Kim Cunningham, and I support her wholeheartedly. Kim is immensely qualified and motivated to lead TPOBC, and you'll be hearing more from her soon.

If you haven't joined TPOBC yet, now is a great time. Please visit our website at: <www.tpobc.org>.

The goal of Texas Parents of Blind Children is to help blind/visually impaired children grow up to become productive, fully functioning, independent members of society by providing information, inspiration, and support to their parents and teachers. We are also dedicated to providing ideas, assistance, and information that will help blind/VI children with developmental delays and additional disabilities reach their potential.

We want parents and teachers to learn how blind/VI people accomplish tasks without eyesight or with limited eyesight; how blind/VI children can use simple adaptations to become full participants at home, at school, and in the community; and how we can create stimulating environments that encourage children with additional disabilities to be active participants in the world. Thanks for your support.

Using The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

by Lisa Crawford, Parent Liaison, Educational Resource Center on Deafness at TSD Parts of this article are adapted from a 2003 press release from the National Agenda, and can be found at <www.ndepnow.org/agenda/agenda.htm>.

Abstract: Parents of children with deafblindness should learn about The National Agenda for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students and what it means for their children.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, deaf, hard of hearing, educational equality, national agenda

If you are the parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) you should be aware of a document called The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. As parents, we know all too well that education for students who are D/HH is far from perfect. Although there are many truly dedicated professionals in the field, there are many other issues that prevent some of our children from receiving a quality education. Inadequate federal and state funding, lack of research, and lack of understanding of the complex needs of our children are just a few of the reasons contributing to this problem. The National Agenda is not a legal document, but rather a series of recommendations based on research and input from parents, professionals, and consumers of D/HH education services and programs. The highly dedicated group of individuals who wrote this document have years of experience, and vast knowledge about the needs of students who are D/HH.

I find this document helpful because I am a parent, not an educator. It helps explain very clearly why certain educational strategies related to placement, communication, language, and literacy are appropriate for my daughter. It has helped me talk about her needs more effectively with the teachers and administrators at her school, and assists me to help develop goals for her IEP. I encourage all parents and educators to read through this important document. You never know, you may be inspired to help raise awareness and be a part of the change our children need.

The excerpt below is taken from the National Deaf Education Project website <www.ndepnow.org> where you can read about individual state efforts to reform deaf education. To learn more about the Texas State Reform, please visit the Texas School for the Deaf website at <<http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/outreach/tnac.html>>.

The National Agenda (NA) is an historic coalition of parent, consumer, professional, and advocacy organizations involved in the education of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, are working to develop an effective, communication- and language-driven educational delivery system for our children.

Why the National Agenda?

The NA formed for one significant reason: the educational system that serves deaf and hard of hearing children is incomplete and ineffective. Our

children, despite their innate abilities, passions, and dreams do not leave school with the skills necessary to be productive adults.

We have known this for a long time and our concerns have been expressed repeatedly and clearly. We do not see the problem as one of individual educators, but rather a larger systemic failure. IDEA was enacted in 1975 and yet the existing system does not understand the central role that communication and language play for our children and how educational and personal growth requires an effective and age-appropriate communication mode and language.

Our colleagues in the blind and visually-impaired communities faced similar frustrations and as a result developed their own national agenda. In 1995 the NA for the education of blind and visually-impaired students including those with multiple disabilities was launched with an endorsement from OSERS Assistant Secretary Judith Heumann. Built around eight national goals the Blind Agenda has grown to include national goal leaders, state goal leaders and a coalition of over 200 endorsing organizations, agencies and schools. Their NA has become the focus of their advocacy and government relations, national, state and local conferences, and numerous articles and position papers as well as websites.

The blind and visually-impaired communities have provided us with an effective example, from which we have taken both inspiration and the general characteristics of their model and have begun to build an “Agenda” specifically designed to meet the unique communication, language, literacy, and educational needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. In this developmental stage the NA has been monitored by a small steering committee and an Advisory Committee composed of representatives from CED organizations, CAID, ASDC, CEASD, AGBell, NAD, ACE-DHH and most recently representatives from public day school education for deaf and hard of hearing students.

What is the NA Vision?

The NA is working for the development of a true communication-driven, literacy focused educational system and a national/state/local support structure for parents, children and educators.

Our vision is three-fold: to build a grass roots movement united behind a set of definitive national goals, to establish a local, state, regional, and national

NA so that parents, professionals, consumers, academicians, advocates, and others have a mechanism through which information can be exchanged, resources created, and work commenced on problems at those various levels, and to advocate for a communication and language-driven educational delivery system whereby every deaf and hard of hearing child will be provided with a quality, literacy-focused, language-rich education.

What Has the NA Done so Far?

The NA Steering Committee drafted the first National Agenda which include 8 goal areas/recommendations:

- 1. Early Identification and Intervention. The Development of Communication, Language, Social, and Cognitive Skills at the earliest possible age is fundamental to subsequent educational growth for deaf and hard of hearing students.*
- 2. Language and Communication Access. All children who are deaf and hard of hearing deserve a quality communication-driven program that provides education together with a critical mass of communication, age, and cognitive peers, as well as language proficient teachers and staff who communicate directly in the child's language.*
- 3. Collaborative Partnerships. Partnerships which will influence education policies and practices to promote quality education for students who are deaf and hard of hearing must be explored.*
- 4. Accountability, High Stakes Testing, and Standards-Based Environments. Instruction for students who are deaf and hard of hearing must be data-driven and must focus on multiple measures of student performance.*
- 5. Placement, Programs, and Services. The continuum of placement options must be made available to all students who are deaf and hard of hearing, with the recognition that natural and least restrictive environments are intricately tied to communication and language.*
- 6. Technology. Accommodations, assistive and adaptive technologies, and emerging technologies must be maximized to improve learning for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.*
- 7. Professional Standards and Personnel Preparation. New collaborations and initiatives among practitioners and training programs must address the serious shortage of qualified teachers and administrators.*

8. Research. *Federal and state dollars should be spent on effective, research-based programs and practices.*

This and other drafts were posted nationally and the NA received thousands of comments from individuals and groups around the nation. In April, 2005 the first hard copy of the National Agenda Goals was published. The NA members have made presentations on the NA at conferences and workshops across the country. It is our intention to have parents, professionals and consumers ultimately craft the National Agenda and together we will implement it.

What Next?

The NA is both a product and a process, the 8 goal areas always being works in progress and reflective of the latest thinking and concerns of our constituencies. The written National Agenda will continue to change and grow. The National Agenda will be working on developing regional, state and local NA leaders, disseminating the current version of the written NA, and working with the U.S. Department of Education and NASDSE (National Association of State Special Education Directors) to further the NA vision.

What Can You Do for the NA?

First and foremost download and read the NA. You should then join the campaign to publicize the NA in your local community. <www.deafed.net> has a power point presentation that you may download to use in spreading the word about the NA. You may also get this power point at <www.ceasd.org>.

Texas National Agenda Collaborative

Reprinted with permission from the Texas School for the Deaf website: <www.tsd.state.tx.us/outreach/tnac.html>

Abstract: The National Agenda Collaborative has addressed education reform for students who are deaf and deafblind.

Keywords: Deafblind, deaf, National Agenda, stakeholders, reform

The following is a history of the efforts for deaf education reform in the state of Texas. The Texas National Agenda Collaborative (TNAC) grew out of these reform efforts and is based on the goals of the National Agenda. The

work of TNAC has been encouraged by our team's participation in the State Leaders' Deaf Education Summits. TNAC is made up of individuals representing the Deaf community, parents, advocates, educators, early interventionists, rehabilitation, post-secondary education, interpreters, and other stakeholders in the education of deaf and hard of hearing children.

Texas State Reform

After the first State Leaders Summit on Deaf Education in Atlanta in the spring of 2005, the Texas representatives met with Texas Deaf Education Administrators at their biennial conference in the following summer. The National Agenda <<http://www.ndepnow.org/agenda/agenda.htm>> was well received and these supervisors indicated their enthusiastic support of reform in deaf education by immediately creating a list of "Hot Topics" (see <<http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/outreach/hottopics.html>>) for the state of Texas. Many of these topics were carried forward in a stakeholders group that began work in March of 2006 to draft a revision of the State Plan for Deaf Education. This document is a requirement of the state education agency and is described in education code as a "comprehensive statewide plan for educational services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing." The original goal was to align the Texas State Plan with the National Agenda. The initial work of the stakeholders identified fourteen areas for reform (see: <<http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/outreach/tnac.html>>).

These were then submitted for consideration to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Policy Team in the Division of IDEA Coordination. The TEA Policy Team separated these suggestions for reform into indicators and descriptors.

They also determined that the indicators would be only those items that can be quantitatively measured using mechanisms already in place for current data collection. These four result statements and indicators are among those required by the State Performance Plan for Special Education mandated by IDEA 2004 and are posted on the TEA website as the Texas State Plan for Deaf Education 2007.

(see: <<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/deaf/stateplan.html>>)

The TEA Policy Team suggested the remaining reform submissions of the State Plan stakeholders were better described as descriptors or best practices and therefore these do not appear in the State Plan for Deaf

Education. Many of the stakeholders believe that these descriptors are critical considerations that must be preserved to accomplish the scope of reform suggested by the National Agenda. Family involvement, the concerns related to low- functioning deaf students, and a myriad of other goals were labeled as descriptors and therefore not included in the State Plan. Consequently, the Texas National Agenda Collaborative has committed to creating a more comprehensive state plan that captures guidelines and standards that would direct the state's implementation of the National Agenda.

Ongoing Efforts

The Texas National Agenda Collaborative continues to meet four times per year and at its Oct. 2007 meeting identified this year's priority to be the writing of a comprehensive state plan for deaf education that is truly reflective of the goals of the National Agenda and of the concerns of the state plan stakeholders. Another function of the quarterly TNAC meetings is networking and sharing of information across agencies as well as exploration of potential collaborative projects.

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Developing my Classroom for Secondary-Aged Students Who Aren't Actively Engaging with People or Objects

By Suzanne Becker, Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Classroom
Teacher, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX

Abstract: A TVI and classroom teacher describes how she serves her secondary-level students who are visually and multiply impaired using Lilli Nielson's Active Learning approach along with other strategies.

Keywords: Effective Practices, blind, deafblind, multiple disabilities, active learning, centers, Lilli Nielsen

I've been a TVI and classroom teacher at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) since the 2001 school year. My classroom is designed for older students (13-22 years) with severe multiple impairments who are functioning below three years of age across most developmental skills (i.e.: emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, object perception, communication, etc.). My teaching has been guided primarily by the educational approaches of Lilli Nielsen (using "Active Learning" and evaluating skills with the Functional Schemes Assessment), Barbara Miles (engaging in conversations with students based on their topics, and being extremely sensitive to the communication of our hands), and Jan van Dijk (interacting with students using meaningful calendars, resonance activities and consistency).

This type of programming existed at TSBVI for students with severe impairments of elementary school age, and I advocated expanding it to include at risk students at the secondary level. I did so by writing a proposal to TSBVI administration in 2006, and received a grant in 2007 from the A+ Federal Credit Union to support the program.

I was led to develop this approach by a student who came to the school in 2003 at 17 years of age with many challenges to his learning. He had a neurological disorder resulting in cortical visual impairment (CVI) and central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), which means his brain had difficulty making sense of visual and auditory information; cerebral palsy impacting mobility on his right side causing fatigue so he'd sit down often and use a wheelchair for long distances; autism; a speech impairment; and a seizure disorder monitored by high doses of medication administered during meals. He also came with well-established behaviors, including self-abuse

(dropping to the floor and head banging) and aggression (throwing, biting, head-butting and pinching).

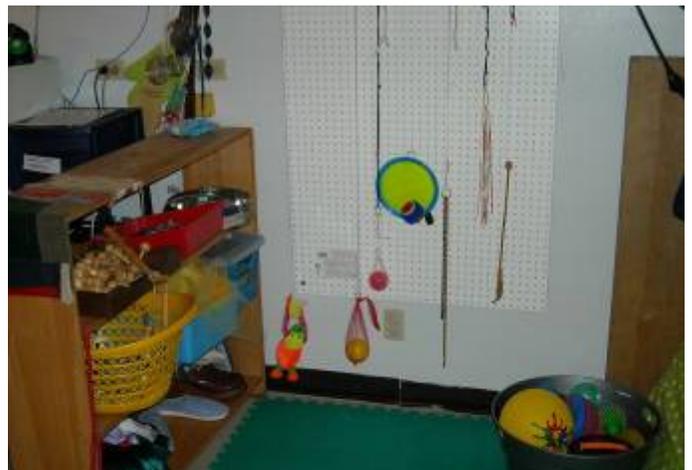
The medical conditions this student had, and those of other students I have since taught, create a tremendous amount of confusion, pain, frustration and disruption in their lives, leaving the students in little control of their bodies and the events that happen to them. I've worked hard to empower the students and let them be in control of their learning experience as much as possible. To do this, I've structured the classroom into distinct learning environments or centers differentiated from one another by themes, the materials stored there, the seating arrangements (tables/chairs, couches, beanbags, rugs), and the physical landmarks dividing them. This organization has helped my students make associations between the centers and the interactions, activities, materials and sensory experiences that occur in each.



beanbags, rugs), and the physical landmarks dividing them. This organization has helped my students make associations between the centers and the interactions, activities, materials and sensory experiences that occur in each.

The centers derive from natural occurring themes in the student's lives. These include:

- a calendar center that includes an area with each student's communication system located nearest to the door, where we communicate about past, present and/or future events.



This page: Calendar Center (top), Kitchen Center (left) and Fabric/Throwing Center. Opposite page: Vibration Center (top) and Vocational Center.



- a hygiene center with soaps and lotions of various smells and different sized containers, toothpastes and toothbrushes, hairbrushes, sponges, foot baths and hand dryers.
- a kitchen or cooking center which includes utensils such as measuring cups, stirring spoons, mixing bowls, cups, placemats, appliances such as a microwave and refrigerator, as well as supplies such as food, spices.
- a clothing center with a standing closet rack upon which clothing of various textures hang, as well as hats, jewelry, shoes and fabrics.

- sensory centers including a tactile vibration area with vibrating pillows of various sizes, and acoustic musical instruments; and an electronic visual/auditory center which contains the beloved keyboards, CDs and cassette players, light boxes and computer.



- a vocational center that includes a can crusher, cans, trash receptacle on wheels, plastic bags, a broom, watering cans, smooth stones, planters, shovels, scoops, water hoses, paint rollers, dusters, mop heads and containers with lids.
- a gross motor center with a swing, mats, scooter boards, roller skates, and rocking chair.
- a throwing center with balls of various shapes, sizes, colors and weights, plastic bottles with different materials on the inside and textures glued to the outside.

In my earlier teaching days, I was in a smaller classroom equipped with one table where activities of very different topics took place: cooking, hygiene, vocational. Some activities were in a one-on-one setting and some a group setting. While each activity was differentiated by its own object symbol, the students taught me that conducting many activities in one place caused them confusion, stress and distrust, resulting in behaviors like shutting down, body or hand tension, hitting, leaving the area, or dropping to the floor. In my attempts to be efficient in a small space, I was also controlling access to materials by keeping them in storage bins and determining when they would make an appearance based on the schedule I created.

When I moved to a larger classroom, I released control of the materials and the time frame in which to use them and gave the students more freedom to explore. I scheduled students' time in the various centers based on their interests, preferences, and sensory needs. I observed the actions they performed with their hands and bodies, with various materials, and with other adults, keeping a pen and paper (and at times a video camera) handy to document and make changes as needed. I noticed students initiating more actions by reaching out and moving their bodies with greater independence, increasing their motor skills in the ways they handled objects, and increasing their social and emotional skills as the time spent in the various centers expanded. I created a matrix for each student that outlined the IEP goals each center addressed, and hung these documents in the centers so all adults interacting with or observing the students would have a reference of what skills to target. I also advocated for a more flexible schedule to allow the students time to continue to grow at their own pace.

Based on my observations, I purchased objects for the centers that contained properties I noticed held the students interest. One student fixated on tickling himself—using his apron strings at meals, paper towels in the bathroom, and his pillow when he woke up in the morning. I made sure to have familiar items for tickling in all centers, and used his attraction to soft materials as a way to get him interested in the less desirable vocational center where I showed him the tickling potential in dusters, a car wash mitt, paint rollers, and a mop head. Another student, who refused most materials, paid attention to jewelry worn by staff providing sighted guide while walking together. He was scheduled to visit the clothing center. We increased our jewelry collection and had interactions with him where we

would put on different types of jewelry for him to notice (various beaded bracelets, a springy phone cord on my wrist, metal rings).

A different student with total blindness, a severe hearing impairment, and severe sensory integration deficits was particularly withdrawn. Touch and interaction stressed him out, causing him to drop to the floor and at times try to remove his clothing. He primarily stood in one place twisting his upper body rapidly from side to side, or sat in a rocking chair with his legs crossed close to his body, tucking his head and arms onto his legs. He could tolerate being in a center if it meant he had room to sway, but he was fearful of touching anything. Presenting an object to him was too demanding, so we hung objects where he could accidentally bump into them in the process of swaying. He felt extremely threatened by interaction, so my goal was for him to allow my presence near him. I stood and imitated his swaying, near enough so when he chose to reach out he felt me resonating the same body movement as his. Over the entire school year, this non-demanding interaction built trust between us, and that trust helped him remain in contact with me as I invited him to follow me as I then reached out to experience objects in the centers.

When I look back at videotape from 2003, my first teaching year with the student who inspired me, I notice ways I had made learning more challenging for him than it should have been. I limited his access to objects because I wanted to prevent his mouthing, throwing and banging them. I had an expectation about how he should manipulate objects based on their function. I placed him in group activities with multi-step sequencing and tried to have him share materials with peers. When he attempted to leave the activity, I responded by trying to keep him in the area, but he was skilled at getting away. When he dropped to the floor, I focused on getting him to sit back up to keep him from banging his head.

Our second school year together, I realized that group activities were too fast paced and over-stimulating to his senses, causing him to leave the area to regulate sensory input. Also, when he was on the floor, he felt stable and could bend his legs into a certain position to ease stiffness from his CP; it helped when he had stomach pain; and it also communicated that he needed to take a break. I struggled less with him when he was on the floor and instead brought materials to him. I surprised both of us by changing this conversation and it strengthened our relationship.

Our third year together, I was guided to look at Lilli Nielsen's Functional Schemes Assessment by staff experienced in her approach from working in TSBVI's specialized elementary level classroom. Sure enough, the assessment confirmed that my secondary level student wasn't ready to take turns with peers nor was he at the level of multi-step sequencing. He needed lots more time handling materials of many different properties and lots more practice having positive interactions with trusted adults who would offer him objects, imitate his actions, model object exploration, and accept him for who he was. His competence and confidence grew!

In our fourth year together we were in the larger classroom and there was now a balance of learning centers where certain activities occurred in chairs and others occurred on the floor. He learned to travel around the classroom and retrieve materials from consistently stored locations. His self-abuse decreased and he learned to express when he felt challenged using language and actions that we modeled. After having extended time to explore objects, he expanded his actions beyond mouthing, throwing, and banging to also include shaking, rotating, twisting, waving, scratching, and sniffing. His functional use of objects increased. He gained significantly more ability to use both hands, even the one impacted by CP, and increased his visual skills as well.

This student had a huge, positive impact on my understanding of how to teach older students with severe impairments. He taught me to listen to him and his peers with greater sensitivity, and to develop an organized environment with motivating materials, in which students can experience decreased stress and increased learning despite the many challenges of their multiple impairments.

Cooperative Teaching

Elina Mullen Ed.D. CAPE, Adapted Physical Education Teacher,
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: An Adapted Physical Education Teacher who works at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired describes her work with students with visual impairments and additional disabilities, and with college Kinesiology students.

Keywords: Adapted Physical Education, visual impairment, multiple disabilities, college practicum.

How does it feel to be in a school as a new or emerging teacher? How does it feel to be teaching adapted physical education in a “special school”?

Eighteen years ago I walked into Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, as an adapted physical educator. At first I was overwhelmed by the myriad of disabilities I encountered in one classroom, in one lesson! It felt like I had fallen overboard into a stormy sea, knowing how to swim, but not knowing where to go. But I learned more about these disabilities, and so began the journey I share with you.

Texas School for the Blind is an excellent environment for a teacher to gain knowledge and build upon one’s skills. The staff development training and on campus courses helped me assimilate my knowledge and experiences into workable units.

Communication is the key to a teacher’s success, and the level and modality is of great importance. This is where I put into practice the van Dijk system I had learned about in college. I also got to use sign language and infuse all other related knowledge into how I worked with my students.

My field is adapted physical education. Thinking of the time it took me to settle into my job, I made contact with the Kinesiology Department at the University of Texas (UT) and offered the students an internship experience. The idea caught on and has been ongoing for fifteen years.

During their internship, college students learn the following:

- a) All people have the same needs and wants. Every one has dignity and needs respect.
- b) All my students are unique individuals with special needs.
- c) Any individual can be taught, if you have the patience to wait “years” for the results.
- d) How to instruct at a level not taught in college.
- e) To be consistent and persistent in teaching the same things the same way over and over and over again.

- f) For students who are deafblind, to be able to break any movement pattern down to its lowest level and give it some meaning. An example is, why do we bend down to touch our toes? The answer is for flexibility. To make this exercise understandable I use:
- Ten little bright square cards in a box (pieces of velcro at the back);
 - A big piece of carpet stuck on the wall like a window;
 - The activity “Let us play the card and Window game”.

The student learns to pick the cards from the floor, one at a time and stick it into the window. At the end of this exercise the student has bent down and stretched ten times for flexibility.

- g) To be the eyes and ears of the students while guiding them through motion.
- h) To use the best teaching practices while working with all students.
- i) To make every movement experience so successful and enjoyable that the student wants to return to your classroom. This motivation becomes so evident on occasions like when a deafblind student stood up during his class activities, went over to his daily calendar, picked out his gym symbol, and proceeded to make his way to the door on his way to the gym.

This cooperative exchange has many benefits, some of which are:

1. UT students have met a student with disabilities and actually worked with him or her, breaking down fear barriers and preconceived ideas;
2. TSBVI students have had many more trials at the movement experience, and as a result learn faster;
3. TSBVI students have peer role models, where applicable;
4. The positive exposure encourages some UT students to venture into the world of teaching and the field of adapted physical education;
5. As members of the society, the UT students are able to make educated choices in terms of policy and practices on behalf of people with disabilities.
6. UT students develop a life-long understanding of disabilities in our world.

Hi Ho! Hi Ho! It's Off to College You Go!
By Elizabeth Eagan Satter, CTVI,
Federal Way School District, Federal Way, WA

Abstract: the author discusses college preparation issues for students with visual impairments, and how teachers of students with visual impairments can support their students in the college preparation and admissions process.

Keywords: visually impaired, college preparation, college admission

As a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), part of the job description includes supporting students in making the next step in their education, as well as transitioning them into life as an independent adult. College is a natural and expected step for many students. The student has the grades and all the book sense, knows how to use his or her equipment, and has a desire to go. Is that enough? Uh, no...

When should you start preparing for college? For students with a disability, it is my personal belief that one can't start soon enough. The student should make a list of what they are good at, what they like to do, and what they feel are their strengths. (See below.)

Once their list is made they have a starting point to talk with their counselor at school and their family at home. The College Board website has an excellent article entitled "Twenty Questions to Ask Your School Counselor" <<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/starting-points/114.html>>. These questions can assist the student by empowering them in their discussions with their counselor.

Sample of list completed by a student

What I do well at school

Using my Braille Note
Math
Science
O&M
Using the computer
Communicating
with people
Driving my TVI crazy

What I like to do

Listen to music
Playing the drums
Read science fiction
books
Hang out with friends
Travel
Cook

My overall strengths

Playing the drums
I can explain
my disability to others
Expressing myself
Soliciting help when
needed
I know who I am
I can make simple
meals

The student must focus on their education, achieving high grades since once the student enters high school, each grade counts as part of the overall grade point average (GPA) that will help with obtaining scholarships and entry into college. Along with working on keeping grades up, there are things that need to be done every school year. At the end of this article is a suggested list of tasks to complete each grade level in high school.

We all have heard that colleges/universities are looking for well-rounded students. But what does that mean? A well-rounded student has good grades and is active in extracurricular activities including clubs, sports, and volunteer or work opportunities. Colleges want to know more about a student than the GPA. They want to see that a student has real world experience and was involved in school life and community activities.

The key to going to college is to be first prepared for college. If students are used to having things done for them, and do not know how to do things like their laundry, for example, college life will be a trial. Going away to camps or short term classes like those at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a great way for the students to experience life in a sheltered way apart from their families.

Knowing oneself is of utmost importance. Student must know their strengths and weaknesses, who to turn to for help, and what they want out of life in order to find success. If students are unsure of themselves, or unable to care for themselves, success is going to seem like a foreign land that requires a passport they don't have.

We as TVI's need to help our students by giving them the tools they need to succeed. We need to work cooperatively with the school counselors, the parents, COMS, transition counselors, and anyone else the student has on their educational team. Because for many of our students it's "Hi Ho! Hi Ho! It's off to college they go!"

High School Student Checklist

Freshman Year

- Develop/Maintain good study habits
- Develop/Maintain good organization
- Know and carry modifications
- Visit guidance counselor/college corner
- Develop 4 year academic plan
- Attend college information fairs
- Attend & participate in ARD/IEP meetings
- Connect with Transition Counselor with DBS
- Participate in extra-curricular activities/clubs
- Access/Use CareerConnect <www.careerconnect.org>
- Volunteerism
- Paid work experiences
- Investigate Transition Tote Bag (available from APH on quota funds)
- Connect with a mentor in an upper grade in high school or college
- Know equipment (name, help desk number, where to go for repairs, manufacturer, etc)

Sophomore Year

- Take the PSAT
- Know and carry modifications
- Visit guidance counselor/college corner
- Meet with college representatives
- Update the 4 year plan
- Attend college information fairs
- Attend & participate in ARD/IEP meetings
- Participate in extra-curricular activities/clubs
- Access/Use CareerConnect <www.careerconnect.org>
- Transition Tote Bag (available from APH on quota funds)
- Work on essay writing
- Interview/job shadow a professional in chosen field
- Do own laundry
- Cook simple meals
- Shop for self (i.e. clothing, groceries)
- Open bank account
- Start to budget monthly expenses

Junior Year

- ___ Register/Take the ACT/SAT:I/SAT:II
- ___ Know and carry modifications
- ___ Update the 4 year plan
- ___ Research/Complete scholarship applications
- ___ Attend college information fairs
- ___ Tour colleges/universities
- ___ Attend & lead ARD/IEP meetings
- ___ Participate in extra-curricular activities/clubs
- ___ Access/Use CareerConnect <www.careerconnect.org>
- ___ Transition Tote Bag (available from APH on quota funds)
- ___ Meet with counselor each grading cycle
- ___ Research college choices
- ___ Obtain copy of transcript
- ___ Order class ring, optional

Senior Year

- ___ Pay senior dues
- ___ Know and carry modifications
- ___ Complete college applications
- ___ Complete FAFSA application

Senior Year Continued

- ___ Visit guidance counselor /college corner
- ___ Review 4 year academic plan
- ___ Take/Retake the ACT/SAT:I/SAT:II
- ___ Attend & lead ARD/IEP meetings
- ___ Participate in extra-curricular activities/clubs
- ___ Access/Use CareerConnect <www.careerconnect.org>
- ___ Transition Tote Bag (available from APH on quota funds)
- ___ Request transcripts to be sent with college application
- ___ Request transcripts with final grades to be sent to college
- ___ Meet with counselor often in regards to grades, transcripts, colleges, etc.
- ___ Ask for recommendations from teachers to be sent to college choices, provide stamped envelope
- ___ Apply for housing
- ___ Order cap & gown, graduation announcements, etc.
- ___ Complete all graduation requirements

Going to College!

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

Abstract: this article discusses DBS services that are available to students preparing for or attending college.

Key Words: blind, visually impaired, Division for Blind Services (DBS), college, university, post-secondary education, bachelor's degree, training, career exploration, employment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, over 60% more than those with only a high school diploma. Over a lifetime, the gap in earning potential between a high school graduate and someone with a bachelor's degree or higher is more than one million dollars. In addition, in an article in the Austin American Statesman, Denise Trauth, President of Texas State University, states that 90% of the fastest growing jobs in the country require some form of post-secondary education and two-thirds of the new job types created over the next decade will require a bachelor's degree or higher. Certainly, the decision to pursue higher education is a wise choice, and the Division for Blind Services offers many opportunities to support individuals who are preparing for or attending college.

Our support for individuals and families often begins in childhood, as a primary focus of our Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program is to ensure that parents maintain high expectations when setting future goals for their children with visual impairments. Specialists in our Blind Children's Program recognize how important it is for children with visual impairments to develop foundation skills in the areas of independent living skills, communication skills, social skills, travel skills, and adjustment to blindness.

Vocational preparation becomes more directed in the Transition Program which serves youth ages 10 to 24. At each stage of the student's development, DBS provides vocational services that will prepare the student to become gainfully employed as an adult.

During elementary and early middle school, Transition services focus on providing opportunities to develop independent living skills and interpersonal skills. Summer camp is an excellent way for students to develop

independence and social skills, as is dance class, music lessons or martial arts classes. Students at this age are also provided opportunities for career exploration to build their knowledge of jobs and career expectations. Children's Specialists and Transition Counselors can assist consumers and families in locating events and activities that meet the unique needs of each child.

As youth reach later middle school and high school, they begin to increase their personal responsibilities and independent living responsibilities. They begin to learn about themselves and develop their own personal way of thinking and accomplishing tasks. At this time, DBS focuses on providing opportunities to experience an employment lifestyle. Volunteer work experiences, part-time employment, and participation in the community allow the student to gain independent living skills and learn about his or her own strengths, preferences, and interests. Transition Counselors work closely with parents, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, and community providers to develop opportunities that will assist the student in identifying his or her unique strengths, priorities, abilities, and interests.

The student and DBS Counselor work together to identify career options that are consistent with these strengths, abilities, and interests and to identify experiences that will further enhance the student's knowledge of their selected career, such as informational interviews or job shadowing. The student may also participate in evaluations and assessments to help determine the nature and scope of services required to meet an identified career goal. As a result of this collaboration, the student and counselor may jointly determine that academic training would be the most appropriate service to help achieve the chosen goal.

In most cases, academic training is provided through Texas public tax-supported colleges and universities. State legislation provides free tuition for individuals who are legally blind to attend any public college or university. Before registration, DBS will provide a Certificate of Blindness which excludes the individual from registration fees and other fees.

Other academic services include provision of books and supplies, reader services, Recording for the Blind services, tutorial services, and appropriate equipment and technology. As with all DBS services, both counselors and consumers have responsibilities in this process. Consumers are expected to utilize any and all benefits available toward the provision and cost of

planned services, such as PELL Grants and disability service offices on college campuses. It is very important early in the process for consumers who have been accepted into a university to apply for available PELL Grants, as these grants can be used to pay for books and other academic-related costs. Consumers would also be encouraged to apply for scholarships, and DBS would provide information regarding available scholarships, such as those available through the American Council of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, the Lion's Club, and others.

Consumers are expected to maintain a full course load, as defined by their specific college or university, although there are some minor exceptions. An incoming freshman may choose to take a reduced load for the first two regular semesters. A graduating senior, as well as individuals attending summer school, may also maintain less than a full course load. Students are expected to show continual progress toward completing their degree program, so they are expected to maintain a 2.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) for each semester.

The academic journey can be fun, exciting, challenging, and demanding. Students have the opportunity to learn more about themselves and the world and to meet interesting people from different places and cultures. They have the opportunity to explore their chosen field of learning and to learn about unfamiliar areas of study. They will be exposed to events and situations that will test their coping skills and (if their parents find out) the coping skills of their parents. It is no ordinary time in the life of an individual, and DBS is proud to be a part of it.

The College Question

By William "Bill" Daugherty, Superintendent,
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: Superintendent Daugherty discusses the decision-making process as students and families consider "the college question."

Key Words: blindness, visual impairment, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, TSBVI, Superintendent Bill Daugherty, post-secondary education, college

A sometimes-heated discussion between parents and educators in our business is the question of whether or not college is in the future for a

particular young person. This happens most often around students who, for whatever reason, have not made typical grade-by-grade progress in the general curriculum. Parents view their children going to college as a rite of passage into adulthood as much as they view it as an educational or career path. Educators sometimes view going to college as a straight trajectory of prerequisite academic preparation combined with a solid plan for what a student wants to do for living. Sometimes it's hard for these two groups to get on the same page. Fortunately, both are advocates for the child, and both want what's best.

Ever heard an educator say "College is so unrealistic for Johnny"? Ever heard a parent say "The school doesn't recognize Johnny's talents that could be built upon to make college a realistic option"? Somewhere along the line as parents and schools work together on a child's future, we sometimes begin to get a disconnect on what adulthood will look like, and this can really come into focus as decisions are made about the amount of school time devoted to the skills of daily living and the time devoted to academics.

It's true that academic knowledge and skills without the skills of daily living is an incomplete package, and it is equally true that the skills of daily living—how to dress, cook and clean for basic examples—won't necessarily pay the rent. We should be looking for that sweet spot for each child where these two critical parts of life are in the best balance that can be achieved.

Parents, we have to really look at our children as the individuals they are and do our best not to project our plans and aspirations upon them in ways that ignore who they are as people. On the other hand, I do this projection all the time with my own kids, and occasionally I'm even successful in accomplishing something good for them. More often I'm not. Educators, we've got to become very well versed in the many forms college and post-high school education takes. There are alternative routes and versions of the college experience that can accomplish much of what students lacking the typical entrance criteria want to achieve. We have to start early on helping parents and their children explore these options, and many of us are not familiar with what the options are.

Mostly we've got to listen to each other and we have to listen to the children and students for which we share a common advocacy. We have to know what's out there in terms of options, and we have to get united on action

that addresses the many gaps and voids we know exist. The education system in Texas—TSBVI, ESCs, ISDs—and the adult services system—DARS/DBS—are working together on the issue of transition to adult life more than ever before. Those of us in the middle of it know just how difficult it is for the non-typical learner to locate an appropriate post-high school experience and to be successful in it. Our partnering with the community colleges to develop, and fund, new opportunities for this group of students is essential. Parents, your voice and advocacy on this front is the most powerful and influential tool we have.

My College Prep Class Experience at TSBVI

By Kayleigh Joiner, Student, Pearland, TX

Abstract: In this article, Kayleigh Joiner describes her experience in the college preparatory class at TSBVI.

Key Words: blind, visual impairment, disability, college preparation, TSBVI, short-term programs

Hello, my name is Kayleigh Joiner. I am a junior in high school in Pearland, Texas, where I participate in some advanced placement classes. This fall I attended the five-day college prep class in the Short-Term Programs at TSBVI. Before I came to the class, I was very nervous about the whole college experience. I knew nothing about what to expect in college. While I attended the class I learned about the different organizations and agencies that are out there to help blind and visually impaired students. I also learned about the offices for students with disabilities and what they can help you with in college. My mind was opened up to what college life is like by getting to talk with college students, some with disabilities. We got a chance to explore some online sites that had different things like applications for colleges (with due dates) and technology available for the blind and visually impaired.

We got a chance to tour three very different college campuses. We got to tour the University of Texas in Austin, Houston-Tillotson (a private college), and Austin Community College. We got a chance to talk with their office for students with disabilities people and find out what they could help with. Touring these campuses gave me a better idea of what type of college I want to attend.

Although I missed a week of school to attend this class, I looked at it as giving me knowledge about my future and that is extremely important. The workload was huge, but the payoff is great. This class has helped broaden my knowledge of college and helped decrease a little of my nervousness about it. I would recommend this class to all students that are considering attending college. You won't regret it!

Editor's note: Short-Term Programs offer an array of classes for academic students throughout the school year. The classes range from 3 to 5 days in length and address a wide range of topics related to the Expanded Core Curriculum for academic students with visual disabilities. For more information about our programs, go to: <<http://www.tsbvi.edu/school/special>>.

TSBVI Summer School 2009

By Lauren Newton, Principal, TSBVI Special Programs

Abstract: Information on 2009 TSBVI Summer School sessions is available online.

Key Words: News & Views, TSBVI, Summer programs

Applications for Summer School 2009 at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired are due on February 14. Programs are available for students ages 6–22—including Life Skills programs, Functional Academic programs, Academic programs, and Work Programs. For a detailed description of our programs, go to: <www.tsbvi.edu/school/special/summer-schedule.htm>.

Summer Camp Is Lurking Around the Corner

By Beth Dennis, Blind Children's Consultant, Division for Blind Services

Abstract: This article provides information about summer camps.

Key Words: blind, vision impairment, recreation, summer camp

You might think it's still winter, the holidays were just yesterday, but it's time already to think about summer activities and summer camp. Many summer camps have already mailed informational brochures and applications, and application deadlines may be as early as mid-April. The most popular summer camps fill up early, and some camps operate on a first come first served basis.

Residential summer camps provide students excellent opportunities to learn new skills and practice old ones. In addition to just plain, old-fashioned fun, students develop confidence, independence and social skills. Some camps offer shorter camp sessions or day-camp programs for younger campers who are not yet ready to be away from home for an entire week.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Be aware of camp deadlines. By Spring Break, make sure you have made a final camp selection.
2. Call early (January or February) to request a camp application form. Some forms take longer to complete and may require a medical release signed by your child's doctor.
3. Talk to other parents, teachers of the visually impaired, DARS-DBS children's caseworkers, or transition counselors about the camp you are considering for your child. Visit the camp's website or, if possible, consider a visit to the camp in the off-season.

In January and February, the Division for Blind Services obtains updated information from camps in Texas that have served campers with visual and other impairments. Please contact your DBS Specialist or your local DBS office for camp information: <<http://www.dars.state.tx.us/dbs/DBSoffices.asp>>. DBS does not maintain a list of all the camps in Texas, and the inclusion or exclusion of a camp should not be considered an endorsement of any particular camp. When selecting a camp, parents should visit the facility, meet the camp director or counselors, and talk to parents whose children have attended the camp in past years. Each camp has its own special attributes and no single camp is the "best" for every child. Trying to match the needs of your child with a camp that will meet those needs should be a leading consideration. Careful research will ultimately result in an informed decision to find the camp that is the "best" for your child.

Introducing Ben and Buzzy Bee!

By Suzy B. Scannell, Education Specialist,
Region 4 Education Service Center

Abstract: this article reviews the InFocus with Low Vision Kit and the book, Ben and Buzzy's Busy Days and other materials included in the kit.

Key Words: blindness, low vision, optical device, visual skills, InFocus with Low Vision Kit, Ben and Buzzy Bee, visual efficiency, Suzanne Scannell, Karen Crone, Dr. Randy Jose

Meet Ben, a bee with low vision, his brother Buzzy, and their Mother, Beatrice Bee. Coming soon, the *InFocus with Low Vision Kit*, available through Region 4 Education Service Center, is a kit of materials to assist TVIs and COMS as they instruct young students to develop visual efficiency and to use optical devices. The kit includes a children's book, *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Days*, an activity book, *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Book*, the Teacher's Guide, and near and distance training charts. The same characters appear in all materials. Some TVIs and COMS may recognize some of them! Look for Miss Natalie, Ben's teacher, and Dr. Randy, a kindly old buzzard! Students become familiar with the characters, which assists with successful learning and refining of visual skills. The children's book has wonderful colorful pictures and tells the story of a bee with low vision, illustrates some of the behaviors typical of children with low vision, helps prepare young children for an eye exam, and introduces optical devices to students. Every page has a lady bug pictured somewhere on the page to encourage scanning. Multiple opportunities to use vision and reinforce basic concepts are included in the story and graphics. The activity book affords many opportunities for students to practice near visual skills. Tasks vary in difficulty from simple to complex and include matching, dot to dot, word searches with differing contrast, mazes, coloring pages and some other surprises. Both the children's book and the activity book are suitable for all children in early elementary grades.

The Teacher's Guide instructs TVIs and COMS to work with students to learn and increase visual skills of localization, fixation, tracing, scanning and tracking using the near and distance charts and picture cards included in the kit. Suggestions are offered for additional activities to practice skills and for data collection.

Written by Suzanne Scannell, Karen Crone and Dr. Randy Jose, the *InFocus with Low Vision Kit* is scheduled for publication in early spring, 2009. The cost of the entire kit is \$180, and includes the Teacher's Guide, near and distance training charts, 3 copies of *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Days*, and 5 Copies of *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Book*. Currently available for purchase separately are the children's book, *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Days* (\$20.00) and activity book, *Ben and Buzzy's Busy Book* (\$25.00). A little

bee told us these would be great gifts! Shop the Region 4 Store at: <www.region4store.com> or <www.esc4.net>, or by phone at 713-744-6302.

Hold Everything! Twenty “Stay Put” Play Spaces for Infants, Preschoolers and Developmentally Young Children with Sensory Impairments and Other Special Needs

by Kay L. Clarke, Ph.D., TVI, COMS.

Written for the Ohio Center for Deafblind Education

Reprinted from the Introduction of the *Hold Everything!* booklet:

Abstract: Hold Everything!, is a booklet that provides parents and educators with “stay-put” play spaces for children with sensory impairments and other special needs.

Key Words: blindness, deafblindness, Hold Everything!, Ohio Center for Deafblind Education, stay-put play spaces, Lilli Nielsen, Active Learning, self-initiated exploration.

“Stay-put” play spaces are play environments that:

- 1) include high interest, multi-sensory materials that appeal to a variety of young children, with and without special needs;
- 2) have parts that are anchored down in some way so that young children can keep track of them and do not have to rely on adult help to retrieve them;
- 3) facilitate and encourage repeated, self-initiated exploration of materials;
- 4) are easily adaptable to match individual children’s strengths, needs and personal preferences;
- 5) may be used individually or with other persons; and
- 6) are inexpensive and easy to make or to put together at home or school.

Lilli Nielsen’s Active Learning philosophy and materials have contributed greatly to the development of these “stay-put” play spaces (see the Resources section on page 43). The premise of the Active Learning approach is that ALL children are capable of interacting with the physical environment around them, no matter what their level of cognitive, motor or sensory abilities may be.

The key to promoting self-initiated exploration lies in structuring the physical environment in ways that children can use their unique abilities to exercise control over the environment. For example, a child who is blind may be unable to visually explore his play space, but may use his hands to find objects that are anchored in place so they won't roll away when bumped. At the same time, a child who is unable to reach out her arms to grasp an object may be able to use her mouth to explore the qualities of an object that is hanging within reach of her lips.

Adults, then, must be willing to step back and allow children time to discover, problem solve and explore on their own. For some children, this may be the first time in their lives that they have been able to initiate actions independently, without adults coaching them or manipulating their bodies. Keep in mind that not all "stay-put" activities presented here will be a good match for all children. Pick and choose activities for a particular child that seem to be a good developmental match and that may pique the interest of the child. The activities may also be modified to better fit the abilities and interests of each child and his or her family.

"Stay-put" play spaces provide children with opportunities to practice and develop a variety of skills. The booklet provides a reference chart that identifies the major skills targeted for each type of play environment. The specific activities that are set up within a play space will, of course, determine the actual skills practiced. Use your imagination and prepare to have fun!

Kay L. Clarke and the Ohio Center for Deafblind Education have published *Hold Everything!*, a booklet based on a workshop by the same name that aims to provide parents and early childhood educators with 20 initial ideas for developing "stay-put" play spaces for infants and young children with sensory impairments and other special needs. It is hoped that the readers of this booklet will use some of these ideas and go on to develop additional creative approaches that will encourage self-initiated exploration, play and learning.

This booklet (English & Spanish) may be downloaded and printed at no cost: <www.sscsco.org/ocdbe/PDFs/holdon.pdf> (English), and <www.sscsco.org/ocdbe/PDFs/Spanish%20hold%20everything.pdf> (Spanish). Hard copies of the booklet (English only) may be ordered by going to <www.sscsco.org/ocdbe/products.html>.

The TEXAS FELLOWS program moves with the times!

by KC Dignan, Ph.D.,

Professional Preparation Coordinator, TSBVI Outreach

Abstract: The TEXAS FELLOWS programs, recognizing those who recruit vision professionals, is growing and changing.

Key Words: Blind, Visually Impaired, teachers, TVI, COMS, recruitment

The Texas Fellows program is a unique opportunity to recognize the work Texans do to increase VI teachers and O&M specialists. Research and experience has long shown that the most influential recruiting activity is talking to someone about being a VI professional. Finding a good future VI professional takes time and persistence, 2 years is common. The Texas Fellows program recognizes the work of anyone who has taken the time and effort to ensure that students with visual impairments have a qualified VI teacher or O&M specialist.

The Outreach Program and Curriculum Development are pleased to announce a new third way to recognize Texas Fellows. The recognition now happens in these three ways:

- The Texas Fellow and their candidate's names are published for a year in this newsletter.
- Texas Fellows and their candidates are recognized at statewide events sponsored by TSBVI.
- And now, Texas Fellows receive a \$50 gift certificate good towards any publication from TSBVI Curriculum Development!

This gift certificate can be used on any publication from the internationally well-known source for classics, such as *TAPS*, or innovative publications like *Empowered*, the new activity-based self-determination curriculum.

For more information on how to enroll in the Texas Fellows program, call KC Dignan (512-206-9156) or visit the Professional Preparation homepage on the TSBVI website. <http://www.tsbvi.edu/pds/index.htm>

See the current TEXAS FELLOWS in the Bulletin Board Section on the following page...

Bulletin Board

Announcements / Regional, State, and National Training and Events

Mail or email your item for the Bulletin Board to Beth Bible:
TSBVI Outreach, 1100 W. 45th Street, Austin, TX 78756 or
<bethbible@tsbvi.edu>

An up-to-date Statewide Staff Development Calendar is posted at
<<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/vi.htm>>

Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Program Honors **Texas Fellows**

Recognizing VI Professionals in their Role as Recruiters

Texas Fellow

Terry Gaines
Terry Gaines
Diane Sheline
Brenda Jackson
Anita Pineda
Susan Butler
RosaLinda Mendez
Carolyn Rimka
Tressie Schindler
Sara Baker
Theresa Taylor
Kathy Krenek

Candidate

Cindy Harber
Monica Campbell
Monica Johnson
Lisa Gray
Alma Soliz
Julie Moyer
Carolyn Metzger
Elizabeth Meeks
Charlotte McKinney
Stacy Vance
Tammy Averitt
Julie Stanfield



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

**Hands-on Learning Stations for Teaching Math
to Visually Impaired Students**
Susan Osterhaus and Other TSBVI Outreach Staff
February 27, 2009 – 9:00 AM-4:30 PM
**Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired,
Conference Center, Austin, TX**

Credit: ACVREP 6, CPE 6

Registration Fee: \$50

Learn to identify and use a variety of adaptive math tools and technology, which allow students with visual impairments to draw, construct, measure, and graph independently. **Learn to** identify and perform basic functions on an accessible scientific calculator, an accessible graphing calculator, and other math technology software and hardware.

A hands-on workshop, participants will practice using the tools and strategies learned. Ideal for a TVI and math teacher to attend as a team. For information, contact Carrie Keith at 512-206-9314 or <CarrieKeith@tsbvi.edu>.



TAER 2009
Piecing the Puzzle Together
March 26-28, 2009
Sheraton Gunter Hotel
205 E. Houston St.
San Antonio, Texas

Keynote Speaker: Bill Daugherty, Superintendent,
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

The annual conference for the Texas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TAER) will be held in San Antonio, TX, on March 26-28, 2009.

Registration Cost: Member \$100; Non-Member \$150; Parent/Guardian \$50

Registration and payment should be mailed by March 10, 2009.

Information and registration materials available at:

www.txaer.org/Conferences.htm

New Interaction Training DVD Available from TSBVI

***You Make the Difference:
An Educator-Oriented Process for Supporting
High Quality Interactions with Students
Who are Deafblind,***

by Craig Axelrod, Kim Conlin and Tish Smith

“Effective interaction helps dissolve the barriers between us. Through a mutual exchange of the deepest human feelings of togetherness, we share a world of understanding and hope.” Dr. Jan van Dijk, 2007

As research continues to validate the role of interaction in attachment, security, relationships, learning and communication, the need for educators of students with deafblindness to develop their interaction skills becomes more apparent. The interaction training process presented in this DVD will help educators learn how to improve the quality of their interactions with students who are deafblind, by changing their own interactive behaviors and by adapting the interactive context. *You Make the Difference* emphasizes and addresses the following educator-oriented learning goals:

- Understand the role of high quality interactions in early development.
- Understand the challenges to high quality interactions with children who are deafblind.
- Identify student-specific factors that impact interactions.
- Recognize the components of interaction.
- Analyze the interactions between adults and students who are deafblind.
- Identify and implement intervention strategies that improve the quality of interactions.

For further information, go to:
<<http://www.tsbvi.edu/publications/difference.htm>>,
or contact Linda Donovan in TSBVI's Curriculum/
Publications Dept. at (512) 206-9240.

Appropriate Communication Assessment for Babies with Deafblindness (A Special Parent/Child workshop)

Gigi Newton and Texas Deafblind Outreach Staff

June 5-7, 2009

**Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Conference Center, Austin, TX**

This training is intended to help parents of children birth-three who have combined vision and hearing loss or deafblindness understand and assess their child's communication skills. This workshop will help parents take a look at the ways their child is currently communicating and help them to build on their child's strengths based on his/her developmental needs. Through discussion and modeling participants will learn strategies and techniques for improving communication both in the home setting and the school/day care setting.

Enrollment limited to 12 families.

For further information and registration:

call Brian Sobek at (512) 206-9225, or email <briansobek@tsbvi.edu>.

=== TETN Video Conferences from TSBVI in Spring 2009 ===

All TETN Interactive broadcasts are scheduled for 1:30-3:00 PM.

For updates, check the statewide calendar at
<<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/vi.htm>>.

Please contact the Distance Learning Consultant at your Regional Education Service Center to access a broadcast.

March 4 Literacy and the Student with Deafblindness - TETN #30913

Presenters: Holly Cooper, Deafblind Consultant, Deafblind Outreach

All students with deafblindness should have a meaningful literacy medium whether it is Braille, pictures, print or even objects. This broadcast will explore the range of literacy media for various levels of learners and discuss instructional strategies that can be considered for the student with deafblindness.

**March 25 Visually Impaired Transition Discussion Group –
TETN #30906**

Presenters: Eva Thompson, Transition Specialist, and David Wiley, Transition Specialist, TSBVI Outreach

This TETN is the second in a series of two facilitated discussions on transition issues facing students with visual impairments and deafblindness and focuses on transition issues, strategies, and tools for preparing the more academic student for life after graduation. Teachers, TVIs, COMS, and parents can learn and share ideas for helping to work for more successful outcomes in the transition from school to adult life. If you have an interest in how to improve the transition process for your students who are visually impaired or deafblind, please join in on this informal discussion group.

**April 15 Sensory Integration & the Visually Impaired Student –
TETN #30914**

Presenter: Lisa Ricketts, OTR, TSBVI

This broadcast presents an OT review of sensory integration theory including the role vision plays in motor development. Lisa will discuss how the tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular systems work. She will also discuss imbalances of the sensory systems and activities we can use to help decrease disorganization and defensiveness.

April 22 Using A Braille Display with Screen Readers - TETN #30921

Presenters: Sharon Nichols and Pat van Geem, Technology Specialists, TSBVI Outreach

This session will provide basic level training on using a Braille display with screen readers and offer instructional strategies for working with the Braille reading student.

April 29 O&M for Multiply and Visually Impaired and Deafblind Students- TETN #30923

Presenter: Ruth Ann Marsh, O&M Consultant, TSBVI Outreach

This broadcast will focus on the O&M skills critical to students who are visually impaired and have additional disabilities or deafblindness. Ruth Ann will discuss a number of important instructional strategies to improve body and spatial awareness, techniques for motivating movement and developing purposeful movement, and task analysis to help break down activities so skills can be infused into teachable moments.

May 13 Visually Impaired Students with Vestibular Issues - TETN #30910

Presenters: Kate Hurst, Statewide Staff Development and invited guest speakers

Many visually impaired students have conditions and syndromes that result in vestibular issues. This broadcast will review the literature on the educational issues related to vestibular problems and suggest best practice approaches in instruction to address the students needs brought about by this condition. Special guest speakers will be included in this broadcast.

The 9th International CHARGE Syndrome Conference

**Hilton Chicago/Indian Lakes Resort
Bloomington, Illinois
July 24-26, 2009**

The conference will begin on Friday, July 24, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. and conclude on Sunday, July 26, at noon. There will be an informal get-together on Thursday evening. Childcare will be provided for all children that have registered for childcare during the meetings on Friday, Saturday and Sunday; interpreters and nurses will be available as needed.

The Registration Form will be sent to all members in early 2009. You are urged to register early so we may plan for childcare, meeting room space, etc. Childcare, interpreters and nursing can only be planned for those children on whom we have complete information.

For information check the web at: www.chargesyndrome.org

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