

TX SenseAbilities

A PUBLICATION ABOUT VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND DEAFBLINDNESS FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS



TSBVI Wildcat Wrestling Team, a student manager, and their coaches pose during the SCASB (Wrestling, Cheerleading & Performance Arts) Championship held between five Schools for the Blind on the TSBVI campus this Spring. Read about the event on page 33.

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TX SenseAbilities is a collaboration of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Texas Health and Human Services Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER IN PRINT?



Print copies of *TX SenseAbilities* are free to Texas families of children who are blind, Deaf-Blind, and visually impaired. We offer these in both English and Spanish, as well as on our website. Recorded versions, in English, are also available on our website.

We would like to know whether you want to receive (or continue to receive) a print copy of *TX SenseAbilities* and need to make sure that we have your correct address.

If you want a print copy mailed to your address, please let us know by **June 1st** in one of three ways:

- **COMPLETE THE FORM HERE:** <http://bit.ly/TXSenseAbilities> **OR VIA THE QR CODE BELOW.**
- **CALL MELANIE SCHACHT AT 512-206-9389.**
- **EMAIL MELANIE AT SCHACHTM@TSBVI.EDU AND PROVIDE YOUR ADDRESS.**

You can always read the newsletter online at <https://www.tsbvi.edu/tx-senseabilities>. Fill out the notification request and you will get an email notice when each new issue is posted.

Contact us by phone, email, or fill out the form at <http://bit.ly/TXSenseAbilities> by June 1, 2020 to have print editions mailed to your address. If we do not hear from you, we will not know to renew your paper subscription!

You can also find the form by using the QR code below:



Thank you for reading *TX SenseAbilities*!

Our First Family Day

Barbara Knighton, Parent of a TSBVI student

Abstract: A parent provides information about Family Day at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) and what it meant to her family to attend for the first time.

Keywords: TSBVI, Family Day, families

Each November, TSBVI welcomes families of current students to come and experience what life at TSBVI is all about. Aside from bringing people together, a major focus is to provide families and instructional teams the opportunity to have a face-to-face conference about their student's progress. These conferences are relatively unstructured and centered around areas of growth, strengths, and planning for next steps. This is all carefully orchestrated around a Transition and Wellness Fair, a carnival in the quad, a performance, and tasty meals served by the cafeteria staff. Our son Joshua is in 9th grade, and this is his first year at TSBVI. Not knowing what to expect, we made our way from Houston to Austin. We were looking forward to Family Day, and while we were filled with excitement, we were also a bit apprehensive with anticipation of the weekend ahead.

Joshua's school building hosted a Fall Festival on the Friday before Family Day. Students from various classes made items to sample and sell. There were yummy foods and beverages, beautiful artwork, and hand-made crafts. Some of the students showed off their musical talents with a brief performance. Joshua's class made buttons, magnets, cards and hosted a photo booth. It was awesome getting to see all the students' handiwork and creativity. The foyer itself was

decorated, and there was such a positive energy between students and staff who visited from all over campus.



Joshua and Katie, his Orientation and Mobility Instructor, pose in front of his class' photo booth.

(cont.)

Our First Family Day—continued

On Saturday morning, we arrived in the cafeteria to get our individual schedules and have breakfast with other families. We were treated to a brief welcome and announcements from the superintendent, and then we were off to begin our day. The weather was perfect, and we were able to explore the Transition and Wellness Fair and some games outdoors. The Transition and Wellness Fair had lots of valuable information for both parents, families and students. Some of the exhibitors included Texas Workforce Commission, the TAPVI parent organization, and information on SSI and SSDI. After exploring the fair, Joshua enjoyed watching his peers partake in the motorcycle rides. He rode on a tandem bike. He also joined us in the photo booth.

When it was time to conference with Joshua's instructional team, we made our way to his classroom. As we requested, all of the related services staff were able to attend. It was so uplifting to hear so many positive things being said about our son and the progress he's made. Unlike our experiences with ARD meetings, the conversation felt less structured and free flowing. We asked questions and exchanged ideas. The hour really flew by!

After our conference, we had lunch with other families in the cafeteria. TSBVI brought in sandwich boxes from a local restaurant and had ice cream for dessert. After lunch, Joshua took us on a tour of "his" campus, as he calls it. He beamed with pride as he showed



Joshua and Mark, Recreation Staff member, take a ride on a tandem bike during Family Day.

us his favorite places on campus. He walked us around to where he gets on the bus to come home, where he goes bowling, and where the recreation center and track are located. After our tour, it was time to head to the auditorium for the student showcase. The performances were outstanding! We really enjoyed the show.

After all the fun, we headed back to the hotel for some rest before dinner. Joshua chose to stay with us at the hotel instead of in the dorm. He loves to travel and stay in hotels, so this was a real treat for him. We ended

our weekend by dropping him off at his dorm on Sunday morning after breakfast and then headed home.

The decision to send our only child with multiple impairments and cognitive deficits off to a residential program several hours away was extremely difficult. Family Day gave us the positive feedback we needed, and it really reinforced our decision. Not only did the experience put our minds at ease, but everyone really made us feel like an integral part of Joshua's team and the TSBVI family. ◆

Low Vision Conference 2020

Accessing 21st Century Tech: What's Applicable, Available, and Affordable

POSTPONED - New Dates TBA

This conference will cover such cutting-edge topics as using growth mindset approach, navigating your IT department, web access, current mainstream technology, practical application of technology for students, and psychosocial issues. The conference will feature a panel of successful adults with low vision describing their experiences with AT in the school setting and onto adult life. Educational teams who are using technology with their students with low vision are the primary audience for this conference.

Registration Now Open!

https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/session.aspx?session_id=39895

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Walking Through Stories: A Literacy Strategy for Reading to Young Children and Early Readers

Kate Borg, Outreach Director, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: The author details the Walking Through Stories strategy used to help students activate prior knowledge of concepts before reading a story. She discusses how this strategy can be implemented at home using tactile pictures or real objects.

Keywords: concept development, literacy, families, reading experiences

*Once upon a time, there lived a **spleeth**. This **spleeth** was the **lipliest spleeth** in all the land. One morning, the **spleeth** decided that he needed to **haynder** to see if he could get some **rukya**s. Sadly, the **plupet** did not have any **rukya**s, so the **spleeth** knew that he was **trased**. Walking home, the **spleeth** heard a **rukya**! The day was saved! The **spleeth** and his family could have breakfast.*

Do you know what a spleeth is? How about a rukya? Before the last sentence, did you think it was something to eat? What does it mean to haynder or to be trased? Does your town have a plupet? If the story had pictures of a spleeth and rukya, would that have helped you understand more quickly?

When reading, understanding is key; it is not enough to hear or read the words. Those words need to have meaning, and that meaning is dependent on our experiences and understanding of concepts. If I have

never heard of a bear and had never seen a picture of one, would *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* have the same meaning?

For children with vision, a common strategy that familiarizes students with a text prior to reading is to take a Picture Walk. Children and students preview images to activate prior or background knowledge and to enhance comprehension (Learn Alberta, 2019). Students are able to make sense of unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts prior to engaging with the text and can therefore gain greater meaning from the story, because they can connect the visual images to their own experiences (Milne, 2014). Taking a picture walk also helps students anticipate what they will read (Vanderbilt University, 2019). As they explore a book's front and back covers, images, and learn the title, students can use what they have gathered from the book to make predictions.

But what do we do for a child who cannot see the pictures well, or at all? How can we develop concepts and activate their background knowledge and experiences? For students with a vision impairment, this process of taking a “picture walk” with a new text is important in order for them to gain understanding and make connections with the text. We need to move beyond the illustrations and help students recall concrete experiences, or provide some if needed.

To illustrate the process of taking a book or picture walk with a child who is blind or visually impaired, we will refer to the popular book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. This is a fantastic story that is available in various media (i.e. braille, tactile, YouTube, etc.) and is certainly one of my favorites.

Step1: Explore the Title

The first part of any story or book is the title. This is a great opportunity to stir your child’s interest in what you are about to read. Asking, “What do you think this book will be about?” will help to build prediction skills.

Examples:

- “Our story today is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Have you ever held a caterpillar? What do you know about caterpillars?”
- “Remember that time we found the caterpillar in the garden? What did it feel like?” (Or even better, “Here is a caterpillar. Let’s let it crawl on your hand.”)

“This caterpillar eats and eats! What do you think will happen as he keeps eating? What kinds of things do you think he eats?”



Title page of The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Step 2: Picture/Book Walk

Slowly flip the pages of the book and explore some of the pictures. You can go page by page, or for longer books, choose a handful of pictures in advance. For children with some vision, ask questions about what they see. “What is going on here?” “Who is this?” “Why do you think they are there?” For children without vision, describe the picture and ask similar questions. Use this time to make sure your child understands key vocabulary they will encounter in the story. For *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, some of the important vocabulary words might include:

- the days of the week
- fruit names such as plum, pear, apple
- egg
- leaf
- cocoon

(cont.)

Walking Through Stories—continued



Tactile images in The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Devin explores The Very Hungry Caterpillar with his teacher.

It will be important to have as many real examples of the core words as possible to build your child's concept development. For this story, letting your child touch, explore, and taste the different fruit the caterpillar eats will give them concrete experiences and enhance their understanding of the story.

Examples:

- "On this page, there is a picture of a big, red apple. What do you think the caterpillar does with the apple? Do you like apples? What do they taste like?"
- "This page has a picture of two pears. Here is a pear. Tell me what it feels like. Let's see what it tastes like."
- "Here the caterpillar has a stomachache. Why do you think he is going to get one?"

Step 3: Read the Story

Now it's time to read the story! Use some of the same questioning strategies as you read. Refer back to statements your child made as they predicted what might happen in the story. This is very beneficial because it reinforces critical thinking skills that you activated during the picture walk. As with the picture walk, build in moments of interacting with real objects as much as possible. Make sure to ask open-ended questions instead of yes/no questions, and ask questions that both require fact recall (who, where, what) and inference (why, how). Guide your child to think of memories that remind them of characters or events in the story. These connections help build their concept development and can make reading experiences more dynamic.



A young student locates the beginning of a line of braille added to a board book.

Examples:

- After reading what the caterpillar eats on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, pause and ask, “What do you think he is going to eat on Thursday? How many will he eat?”
- “Remember after Thanksgiving when everyone’s tummies felt so full? I bet that’s how the caterpillar feels!”
- When he builds the cocoon around himself ask, “What do you think will happen when he comes out?”

Finally, when you come to the end of the story, “walk backwards” with your child. Ask them if their predictions were correct. Discuss any surprises in the plot and ask why they think the story ended that way. Take a few minutes to review the new words and concepts that you reviewed before reading. If necessary, eat more fruit!

Using this strategy of “walking” through a story is a great way to peak a child’s interest and improve their comprehension of the story. Providing them with descriptions and concrete examples of what is in the pictures

and then asking them questions helps to stir their imagination while building their concept development. Remember, literacy is much more than being able to read words on a page...it is about building understanding and providing experiences with those words. 🍎

References

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Benefits of Braille

In the 86th Texas legislative session, Texas Education Code 30.002 was changed to delete reference to the term "functionally blind". As a result, information about the benefits of braille now should be given to all students with visual impairment at each annual ARD. The Texas Action Committee for the Education of Students with Visual Impairments created an updated sample form to accomplish this. It is a PDF with fillable boxes (should you choose to use it electronically), or it can be printed out and shared. This PDF is only a sample because the law does not specify how the information about braille should be conveyed; individual districts can modify this sample or create their own process.

More information:

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/braille-resources/1880-braille>

Benefits of Braille Sample Document (PDF):

https://www.tsbvi.edu/images/2020/benefits-of-braille_sample.pdf



AER International Conference 2020

Join a community of TVIs, COMS, VRTs, LVTs, advocates, scholars, policymakers, and other professionals for the AER International Conference 2020. This conference is the only convening of its kind in the United States and will feature dynamic keynote speakers, global leaders and world class presenters covering a range of topics of critical importance to the field. We bring together more than 600 professionals to focus not only on advancing knowledge, skills and abilities, but also to highlight successes, resilience, assets, and strengths. With over 170 educational sessions, special events, award ceremonies, and the opportunity to earn CE hours, the 2020 AER International Conference is an event you don't want to miss.

When: July 22–26, 2020

Where: St. Louis, MO

Conference Venue: St. Louis Union Station Hotel

Conference Registration is Now Open

<https://aerbvi.org/professional-development/conferences/aeric2018/registration/>

Register online or complete a conference registration form and submit via email, telephone or postal mail:

- **Email:** conference@aerbvi.org
- **Telephone:** 703-671-6390
- **Mail completed form:** AER Conference Registration, 5680 King Centre Drive, Suite 600, Alexandria, VA 22315

A Bill of Rights for All Children with Visual Impairment and their Families

The Bill of Rights that follows was created in partnership with the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI) and the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB). As the President of AERBVI, I was lucky to be involved in the creation, collaboration, and presentation of this document. As a parent, I hope it proves to be a useful tool for families and educators to better determine and advocate for the specific needs of our students. For those interested in Spanish or Vietnamese versions, they can be found at <https://aerbvi.org/?s=bill+of+rights> thanks to translation provided by the California School for the Blind.

Emily Coleman

Superintendent, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Preamble: In addition to numerous educational principles that have been proven to be beneficial for children with visual impairment, all the provisions of what constitutes a “Free and Appropriate Public Education” under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 shall be assumed along with this bill of rights.

1. Children with all levels of visual impairment (including those with multiple disabilities and those who are DeafBlind) have a right to early intervention/instruction provided by highly trained and qualified teachers of students with visual impairment and certified orientation and mobility specialists, that is timely, ambitious, and results in the highest possible achievement for each child.

2. Children with visual impairment have the right to a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment by highly trained and qualified teachers of students with visual impairment to determine appropriate services following the initial clinical eye exam.

3. Parents/guardians of children with visual impairment have the right to assistance in interpreting the educational implications of the diagnosed visual impairment that is provided by highly trained and qualified teachers of students with visual impairment and certified mobility specialists and the right to seek assistance from regional/national agencies (including consumer advocacy organizations) that can help them make informed decisions on behalf of their child.

4. As required in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, "in the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team must provide for instruction in braille and the use of braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in braille or the use of braille), that instruction in braille or the use of braille is not appropriate for the child." Appropriate reading and writing media are determined by conducting a learning media assessment.

5. Children and families have the right to be fully informed about the “**Expanded Core Curriculum**” of skills unique to

(cont.)

Children's Bill of Rights—continued

students with visual impairment, which includes: compensatory skills, orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, assistive technology, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination.

6. Children have the right to assessment and instruction, in school and in their communities, in every area of the **Expanded Core Curriculum** that is deemed appropriate by the educational team and includes the parents/guardians as the primary decision makers and includes the student when appropriate. The **Expanded Core Curriculum** is equal in importance to the standard academic curriculum and will not be overlooked in the educational plan.

7. Children have the right to receive school materials that are accessible, in the preferred format and at the same time as their sighted peers. Children have an absolute right to testing procedures and instruments that are fair and accessible, that take into consideration the results of the functional vision evaluation, and include all accommodations identified in the IEP.

8. It is the right of children and families for a full range of educational placement settings to be discussed at IEP meetings, including the variety of unique programs and options offered in specialized schools/services for children who are visually impaired. A specialized school may offer the best opportunity for achievement and be the “least restrictive environment” for some children.

9. All children with a visual impairment have the right to teams that enthusiastically assist them in preparing for transition to independence and adulthood.

10. Children with visual impairment, including those with multiple disabilities and DeafBlindness, have the right to be perceived and treated as equal, active, and contributing members of their communities, classrooms, and schools. As with all children, their engagement through belonging increases the collective value of each setting within which they participate.

The rights listed in this document consist of a combination of legal rights, ethical rights, and human rights. This document exists as a resource for students, families, and professionals. The authors hope that this resource will be widely distributed and endorsed (formally or informally) by interested individuals and organizations. It is not fully inclusive of all rights; it is a starting point for teams when planning individualized programs for children with visual impairments.

This resource is the result of a joint project between the leaders of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB).

May, 2019 ◆



BCP Collaborates to Create Knowledge

Amanda Portillo, Blind Children's Specialist, Blind Children's Program, Office of Independence Services, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

Mary Ann Siller, Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Richardson ISD

Abstract: The Blind Children's Program and local independent school districts provided families an opportunity to learn about creating a sensory space.

Keywords: active learning, Blind Children's Program, BCP, developmental needs, families, little room, sensory space, sensory integration

Dallas area Blind Children's Specialists collaborated with Richardson and Plano Independent School Districts to provide families with an opportunity to learn about sensory integration, active learning fundamentals, and how to develop their own sensory spaces.

Families learned how to best use a sensory space for the individual needs of their child. They learned how to create a "little room" tailored to fit their child's physical and developmental needs. Parents were able to understand the use of this sensory space and how to help their child engage with their surroundings by making materials easily accessible and using engaging items that can easily be found around their homes. They also learned how long their child should be in a sensory room, when to switch out items, how to adapt the space as the child grows and learns, and most importantly, how to be patient and allow the process to take place.



Materials used to create sensory spaces during the BCP parent training.

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BCP Collaborates—continued



A BCP family works on creating engaging activities for their sensory room.



The mother of a student with a visual impairment shows the sensory materials she created with her child's TVI during the family training.

Families were also able to make sensory trays and vests, along with sensory bottles for their children. They met other families and shared ideas and insight, while they actively made materials that will stimulate the learning process of their children.

Parents were given the opportunity to ask questions and sit in on an Active Learning presentation by Valerie Murtaugh, Active



The mother and brother of a young student with a visual impairment put together a sensory room.

Learning Classroom Teacher who specializes in creating materials and sensory spaces for children. Every family that attended took home an active learning information sheet for future reference. Along with the items created, they also received a sensory bin filled with additional items to use as their children progress in their development and awareness. Families left feeling confident about using the tools provided as they continue to explore and learn how to develop innovative sensory activities with their children. 🟠



Right: A young boy explores objects in a sensory room.

Discovering the Future: Transition for School to Adult Life for Students with Visual and Multiple Disabilities, Including Deafblindness

POSTPONED - New Dates TBA

This weekend workshop is designed for families of middle school and high school students with visual and multiple impairments, including those who are Deafblind, who will need significant long-term services and supports in the community. Participants will gain new ideas about making plans for adult life after graduation when traditional paths to college and career may not seem like the best fit.

Please join us to learn more about strategies for planning and executing a person-centered transition plan for your family member. This event will be highly interactive, and is designed to help families discover new possibilities for rewarding lives after graduation. Participants will learn about finding and advocating for the support and resources they need to navigate along the way and reach their individual destinations.

The target audience for this event is adult family members of students who will need significant, life-long support. Professionals who work with a participating family's student, or who have a particular interest in transition planning for these students, may also register to attend.

Register NOW!

https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/session.aspx?session_id=39768

TSBVI Outreach Program Honors Texas Fellows
Recognizing VI Professionals in their Role as Recruiters
2019–2020

Texas Fellow

Shelly Sumner
Kenny Johnson
Trina Heim
Marie Heidemann
Alecia Self
Lannette Burlingame
Cynthia Carter

Candidate

Emily DuPree
Alyson Bailey
Danielle Gonzalez
Lorraine Harriott-Jones
Donita Potts
Lisa Castle
Stephanie Woods

The Texas Fellows program acknowledges the individual recruiters (Texas Fellows) and welcomes the new VI professionals (Candidates) to the field. You are eligible to be a Texas Fellow if you were a significant person in the candidate's recruitment. To be eligible for the program during the 2019-2020 school year, candidates must have started their training after May 15, 2019. Texas Fellows and Candidates receive the following recognitions:

- The names of the Texas Fellows and the Candidates are published in the *TX SenseAbilities* newsletter.
- Texas Fellows and the Candidates receive special acknowledgement at all state-wide TSBVI-sponsored activities.

AND

- One of TSBVI's most popular publications

OR

- Registration assistance for an upcoming TSBVI-sponsored conference.

For more information about the Texas Fellows Program contact Mary Shore at shorem@tsbvi.edu; 512-206-9156. Texas Fellow applications, recruitment materials and detailed information on how to become a VI professional in Texas can be found here: <https://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional>.

The Texas CVI Initiative: Web-based, Self-Paced Training Coming Soon!

Lynne McAlister and **Sara Kitchen**, VI Education Specialists, TSBVI Outreach Programs

Abstract: The authors introduce a CVI training product that is currently being created as part of the work of the Texas CVI Initiative. The Texas CVI Initiative is a collaboration between statewide leaders in visual impairment and TSBVI Outreach to address training needs in Texas in the area of Cortical Visual Impairment. Stephanie Walker, the Lead for the State Leadership Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SLSBVI) Network in Texas, described the creation of the Texas CVI Initiative in the Spring 2019 issue of *TX SenseAbilities*: <http://bit.ly/TXCVIArticle>

Keywords: Cortical Visual Impairment, Cerebral Visual Impairment, CVI, Neurological Visual Impairment, Christine Roman-Lantzy, CVI Range, assessment, intervention, online learning, professional development, Texas Sensory Support Network, TSSN, CVI Web Course

Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) is a leading cause of visual impairment in the western world. Understanding and evaluating CVI can be complicated because it involves how vision is processed in the brain. Since everyone's brain is unique, CVI manifests differently in each individual. Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) may have received little to no training about neurobiology, the visual processing systems in the brain, and how these systems work with one another. If a practitioner does not have a sense of how these systems work, it is very difficult to recognize when these processes are absent or atypical, as in the case of someone with CVI. Although current university students tend to receive more training about CVI than those in the past, this topic, like the brain itself, is complex. As the knowledge in the field of visual impairments

increases, we have a mandate to update instruction and improve skill acquisition for new and experienced teachers.

According to the *2019 Texas VI Registration*, a statewide annual registration of students with visual impairments, 1,936 students were identified as having CVI in the state of Texas. Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI), in conjunction with Diane Sheline (Perkins-Roman CVI Range Endorsee), Texas Tech University (TTU), Stephen F. Austin University (SFA), Educational Service Center professionals, and several ophthalmologists have formed a coalition called the Texas CVI Initiative aimed at increasing knowledge of CVI in our state. The project receives funding through the Texas Sensory Support Network (Tx-SSN) <https://www.txssn.org/>.

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

CVI Web Initiative—continued

There are many schools of thought about CVI and its manifestations and intervention techniques. This is not surprising given the incredible complexity and uniqueness of the human brain. Our group decided to focus on the information that would be most useful and immediate for established and/or aspiring teachers of students with visual impairments. We decided to focus on the only CVI-focused assessment currently available that has been peer reviewed, tested, and found reliable: the CVI Range developed by Dr. Christine Roman-Lantzy. In Roman-Lantzy's 2018 publication, *Cortical Visual Impairment: An Approach to Assessment and Intervention (2nd edition)*, the author takes the reader through familiarization of the characteristics of CVI and provides a thorough assessment process that leads to specific individualized interventions that can be applied in both school and home settings. Teachers often have mandated staff development requirements that allow little freedom for self-study. It may be difficult for them to find the time to read and process an informative text like Dr. Roman's, much less practice the process in a safe environment where a misunderstanding of the material won't lead to problematic outcomes for students. It has been identified that this type of experience is needed for new as well as many seasoned TVIs.

As a group entrusted to support TVIs in Texas, the Texas CVI Initiative strives to provide teachers with experience in recognizing CVI characteristics, correctly completing each step of an assessment process (The CVI Range) and, using those results, implementing appropriate interventions that will lead to increased student success. One of the ways we are doing this is by creating an online learning opportunity called the *CVI Web Course*.

The CVI Web Course will consist of three online modules that give in-depth information about conducting the CVI Range on three students. Students were chosen whose CVI Range scores fell within each of three phases of CVI identified by Dr. Roman:

- Phase I: Building Visual Behavior
- Phase II: Integrating Vision with Function
- Phase III: Refinement of CVI Characteristics

Each self-paced module introduces participants to a student, provides their real-life parent interview answers, shows videos of the student participating in their individual educational settings, and then shows videos of their direct assessment. Participants will be provided with an observation sheet to collect and record data gathered from these three sources. Trainees are encouraged to follow along by scoring their own copy of the CVI Range and by comparing their conclusions to the modules. Intervention ideas for each of the students are also provided.

Trainees are required to purchase *Cortical Visual Impairment: An Approach to Assessment and Intervention* by Roman-Lantzy, C. A. (2018), 2nd Edition, New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

You may order this book from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) <https://www.aph.org/product/cortical-visual-impairment-an-approach-to-assessment-and-intervention-2nd-edition/> or contact Sarah Bush at APH (502.899.2306; sbush@aph.org). Some copies are also available on Amazon.

Trainees will not be evaluated based upon their attempts to score the CVI Range.

There will be ungraded quizzes within the modules to check for understanding and a test at the end of each, which must be passed to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The intent is to provide those who are unaware or unsure of the assessment process an opportunity to follow along and watch an experienced evaluator (in these case studies, that is Diane Sheline, who is a Perkins-Roman CVI Range® Endorsee) score the CVI Range. The three modules not only give participants three opportunities to solidify their skills and practice using the CVI Range, but will also provide exposure to the diversity in the use of functional vision in individuals with CVI. These modules are designed to coordinate with and prepare for Dr. Sandra Newcomb's course, *Assessment of Students with CVI: Reliable Scoring of the CVI Range*, which is currently offered through the Perkins School for the Blind <https://www.perkinselearning.org/earn-credits/online-class/cvi-range-spring>.

These online learning opportunities, plus experience in evaluating individuals with CVI, can adequately prepare someone seeking The CVI Range Endorsement®.

Following the process outlined in each of these classes will help professionals:

- Understand more about CVI
- Be able to apply that knowledge to their specific students.
- Be empowered to more confidently guide the student's team to apply appropriate interventions for each interfering CVI characteristic across the school day as well as in the home.

These classes will be free of charge and may be accessed by any interested individual including family members, support staff,

and medical professionals.

The CVI Web Course is being beta-tested by experienced TVIs, colleagues without training in visual impairment, and students at SFA and TTU who are learning about CVI. Data will be gathered from these individuals and applied to create the final product. It is projected to be available for use by the end of 2021.

CVI is a complicated issue. The mechanism of sight involves myriad areas of the brain. These areas contribute different information about what a person is seeing and interacting with and shares that information with almost immediate precision. Any interruption in this robust integration can result in decreased functionality which can vary from only affecting a few visual aspects, such as color perception or facial recognition, to creating a condition that results in functional blindness. Because the brain can relearn skills impacted by some form of damage (neuroplasticity), it is vital that families and professionals know what specific environmental modifications help their child more easily use their vision. If these modifications are used consistently, children will have more opportunities to practice seeing, and through practice hopefully increase their vision. The CVI Range will isolate interfering visual characteristics, and Dr. Roman provides intervention suggestions and resources to aid the child's team when creating appropriate environments. It takes time and study to learn how to administer the CVI Range using only the Roman-Lantzy book. Time is unfortunately a luxury many educators and support staff do not have. It is our hope that the TSBVI CVI Courses will serve as complementary resources to the Roman-Lantzy book and

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

CVI Web Initiative—continued

expedite educators' knowledge of CVI characteristics and how they may manifest in each Phase. These courses can also help them conduct the CVI Range assessment correctly and increase teacher confidence and competence as they implement appropriate interventions. ■

Right: Eli, one of the study students, looks at a favorite image on his iPad while holding it. His evaluator, Diane Sheline, shares Eli's enjoyment.



Professional Development Offerings on CVI from the Perkins School for the Blind

<https://www.perkinselearning.org/earn-credits/professional-development>

Perkins eLearning offers a variety of opportunities for professional development about CVI:

https://www.perkinselearning.org/finder?search_api_views_fulltext=cvi.

Options include online courses, podcasts, micro-credentials, self-paced online tutorials, webcasts, and webinars. All of Perkins' professional development offerings are divided into two categories. **Watch and Learn** options are offered free of charge, while the **Earn Credits** options vary in cost, depending on how many credits are awarded. Read more about individual offerings and ways to earn credit at <https://www.perkinselearning.org/earn-credits/professional-development>

Specific Learning Disabilities

Cherry C. Lee, Program Specialist for Dyslexia, Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Abstract: Cherry Lee shares her expertise on specific learning disabilities including dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, their evaluation, and their co-occurrence with visual impairment. The author is a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT), Licensed Dyslexia Therapist (LDT), and an educational diagnostician.

Keywords: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, specific learning disabilities, SLD, evaluation, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, academic difficulties

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Overview

As of 2015, about 5.9 million students in the U.S. received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, almost 39 percent of these students—roughly 2.3 million—qualified with a specific learning disability (<https://www.ncld.org/research/state-of-learning-disabilities/identifying-struggling-students>). IDEA defines the term specific learning disability (SLD) as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations” despite instruction from trained personnel, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity (<http://www.idonline.org/features/idea2004>). There are eight areas of SLD—two in the area of oral language (oral expression and listening comprehension), three in the area of reading (basic reading skills, reading fluency, and reading comprehension), one in the area of writing (written expression), and two in math (calculation and problem solving).

Learning disabilities fall on a continuum and not all students with SLD will qualify for special education services. Learning disabilities also co-occur with each other and/or disorders of executive function, including Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia

Dyslexia is a term that refers to a learning disability that is characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities. Students with dyslexia will demonstrate primary difficulties reading words in isolation, decoding unfamiliar words, spelling and reading fluently. Older elementary and secondary students with dyslexia may struggle with reading comprehension, multisyllabic word decoding, and written expression as well as suffer from low self-esteem due to poor reading skills. Researchers estimate that between 5-15% of the population has some level of dyslexia (<http://www.idonline.org/article/10784/>). Dyslexia, like all learning disabilities, falls on a continuum ranging from mild, moderate, severe to profound.

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Specific Learning Disabilities—continued

Dysgraphia is a term that refers to a learning disability in writing and is characterized by poor handwriting, spelling, and written production abilities. Dyscalculia refers to a learning disability in math and is characterized by difficulties solving math problems fluently and accurately.

How do the terms dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia relate to specific learning disabilities? Students with these conditions may be identified through IDEA under the SLD category. The US Department of Education and Rehabilitative Services provided clarification in a Dear Colleague Letter in 2015 which stated there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of said terms in IEP and evaluation documents (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guid-ance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf>).

Evaluation of SLD

When determining the presence of a specific learning disability (SLD) with the condition of dyslexia, Admission Review Dismissal (ARD) committees must ensure student underachievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading. Also, data should indicate that the student received appropriate instruction by qualified personnel and progress was documented periodically. Although sensory deficits, emotional disturbance, socio-cultural factors, economic disadvantage, and/or limited English proficiency cannot be the **primary** causes of the learning difficulties, students with SLD may be English Learners, they may come from poverty, or they may have sensory impairments, including visual impairment (<https://fw.esc18.net/display/Webforms/ESC18-FW-Summary.aspx?FID=143&DT=G&LID=en>).

Parsing the interconnected issues of academic difficulties and visual impairments requires careful consideration. The evaluation should be comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and include multiple sources of data. When visual impairment is suspected or identified, the ARD committee must include a TVI, a teacher who is certified in the education of students with visual impairments. Additionally, a Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) member should be included when the student is an English Learner to address concerns and needs related to language differences.

It is possible for students with visual impairments to have learning disabilities, including dyslexia, that are unrelated to the visual impairment(s). Again, evaluating all data points using a team approach is imperative. Eligibility should not be predicated on a single subtest or data point and should incorporate information that demonstrates instructional materials were made accessible to students with visual impairments <http://aem.cast.org/navigating/personalizing-the-reading-experience.html>. ●

Additional Resources

Please see the expanded list of additional resources for this topic in the online version of this article:

TX SenseAbilities Spring 2020

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/tx-senseabilities#current>

Communication is Connection: A Week With Dr. Paul Hart

Kaycee Bennett, DeafBlind Education Specialist, TSBVI Outreach Programs

Abstract: This article provides an overview of the 2019 Advanced Practitioner in DeafBlindness Series with Dr. Paul Hart, from Sense Scotland.

Keywords: Sense Scotland, DeafBlind, co-created language, quality of life activities, Pleasure-Purpose Principle

Dr. Paul Hart, Head of Research and Practice at Sense Scotland, spent a week with the DeafBlind Outreach Team of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in November 2019 as part of the Advanced Practitioner in DeafBlindness Series that is hosted semi-annually to annually by TSBVI's DeafBlind Outreach team. This series is dedicated to bringing training to practitioners already serving students who are DeafBlind across the state of Texas. Team members kept him very busy, and he shared a great deal of knowledge with us over the course of the week. Below is an overview of the week along with some of my main take-aways.

On Monday, we interviewed Dr. Hart and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Within this interview, we asked Dr. Hart, "How do we know if people who are DeafBlind are commenting or requesting

when they just use one word or sign?" His response was simple, but it completely changed my thinking. He credited Gunnar Vege of Sense Norway and replied that "we should always prioritize declarative language." This means that we should assume that the person who is DeafBlind is commenting and just wants to talk about the word they say or sign, not that they are asking for it. If they are really requesting something, they will eventually make that known in some other way. He explained that by assuming that they want to talk about a word, we can expand their use of vocabulary and communication far beyond just requesting wants and needs. By doing this, we can help them share their emotions and experiences, gather more information about a topic of interest, and reminisce.

Dr. Hart also discussed the difference between the concepts of "important to," and

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A Week with Dr. Hart—continued

“important for.” “Important to” refers to the activities, items, people, etc. that an individual loves, enjoys, and that make them happy. “Important for” refers to the items or activities that are important in order for the person to be safe and healthy. Dr. Hart talked about the need for a balance of items and activities that are both important to and important for the student within the IEP, and also within the planning of their day.

On Tuesday, Dr. Hart led a discussion with the Teacher for Students who are Deaf-Blind Pilot groups. Within this discussion, he emphasized that if we see students as lesser than equal communication partners, they will never become equal communication partners. We have to be equal communication partners, in the mode of our students, for them to continue to develop important communication skills and a natural language. We have to allow the students



Dr. Paul Hart getting his fingernails painted by a student and her teacher, Sarah Steele.

to teach the teachers. The students are the experts on living in a tactile world and using tactile communication. We, as educators, have to be good observers and let ourselves learn from our students. Through thoughtful observation and interaction, co-created language can occur. Another point that Dr. Hart emphasized was that anything that our students are doing can become meaningful when we join them. We just have to set aside our agendas and plans and allow ourselves to truly engage with our students.

On Wednesday, Dr. Hart presented to a large group of 83 people. He covered many topics surrounding the ideas of happiness and a high quality of life. He discussed Paul Dolan's Pleasure-Purpose Principle. This is the idea that people's happiness is directly related to things they find enjoyable and that provide them with a sense of self-worth. I felt that this directly relates to what we, in DeafBlind Outreach, refer to as meaningful and functional activities. Both of these ideas lead to questions such as: Will this activity give the student pleasure? Will this activity have meaning to the student's life? Does this activity have purpose for this student? These are questions we should be considering as we plan activities, goals and lessons. Dr. Hart also reminded us that communication is connection, and no matter the disability, our job is to make connections.

On Thursday morning, Dr. Hart visited two classrooms on campus at TSBVI. He observed and interacted with students while staff from the DeafBlind Outreach team took videos. In the afternoon, the teams came together and analyzed video clips of two students. The teachers led the analysis and Dr. Hart facilitated a great discussion about the communication and interactions of the students.

Julie Lemman was one of the teachers that participated in this day's events. The following are some of her thoughts on the experience:

"I truly enjoyed the opportunity to get to meet with Paul and dive a little deeper into a few of the interactions we share with my student in the classroom. I often feel as though we do not always give ourselves the time, as teachers, to pause and reflect on our interactions and shared experiences with our students. The conversations with Paul were empowering as it reinforced many of the wonderful interactions we are already having. The time spent with my student's team observing his communication and interest in connecting with his communication partners was time well spent. We just met yesterday and established a plan to be even better communication partners with my student. We are planning to take a moment during transitions to have a three-way conversation with him in which we share some information related to an experience we just had. We hope this will give him access to how some information is shared across his team, as well as giving him the opportunity to share some of his topics/experiences with staff members who might not know what he was doing earlier in the day. I've gained new insight into how I can be a better communication partner for him, as well as talking to other members of his team about how we can include him in those important conversations about what he enjoys and his novel experiences. We hope these moments and conversations will support him in continuing to expand his language, as well as empowering him to connect and communicate with his world."

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A Week with Dr. Hart—continued

Sarah Steele was the other teacher involved in Thursday's events. This was what she had to share about her experience participating with Dr. Hart:

"I appreciate the opportunity to focus on and study my interactions with my student. Being in this field for the time that I have been so far, I have genuinely recognized how impressionable it can be to see yourself interacting with someone who you care so much about in terms of what impact you have on her or his comfort and access to the vast amount of details possible in any shared moment. It involves so many thoughts and perspectives of both the teacher and the student. Introducing my student to Paul Hart and painting his nails bright red with her was a moment I will always celebrate because of the social barriers we sort of got to cross; I think that is something that is so important to recognize as we breakdown and scaffold where our social habits come from as a culture.

Only then, decide as teachers, in the moment, which interactions are really within the right of our students to experience, as equal members of our culture. We should not disregard the wonder and opportunity for them to have experiences and to connect with others. Finding a healthy balance and considering everyone's perspective to facilitate connection is one of the most wonderful qualities of being a teacher. That, and unraveling everything you've learned to back up and analyze how you learned it—and in what ways those lessons are important to your students based on their life's experiences. Understanding that I don't fully

understand my student's perspectives on many things, but that I can respect and never stop learning how to embrace the wonder alongside her in a way that is meaningful and secure to her, is a great reflection I take from our experiences with Paul Hart."

Friday morning we had community members representing groups that plan activities for individuals who are DeafBlind in Texas come together and discuss those activities with Dr. Hart. He shared some of the activities that Sense Scotland organizes including those involving the arts, music, and the outdoors. DeafBlind Camp of Texas, TouchBase, DeafBlind Service Center of Austin and others shared information about the activities they have planned including ziplining, sailing, visual arts, theatre, and more. We had a great discussion and exchange of ideas surrounding activity planning and concept development outside of the classroom. Later that afternoon, the DeafBlind Outreach team was able to spend a few hours visiting with Dr. Hart and debriefing about the week. We asked and answered each other's many questions, and talked about ways to stay connected in the future.

I have attended two of the previous Advanced Practitioner workshops, but this was my first time to be part of the whole week as a new member of the DeafBlind Outreach team. There were many discussions and quotes shared that prompted a deep reflection of my practice. I am forever grateful for the time Dr. Hart spent with our team. ◆

What's Happening with Active Learning, Spring 2020: Free Online Training, Support for Active Learning Trainers and Practitioners, and Assistance with Active Learning Equipment

Scott Baltisberger and **Sara Kitchen**, VI Education Specialists, TSBVI Outreach Programs

Abstract: The authors provide an update on the expanding knowledge and use of Active Learning, a technique designed to provide education for students who are functioning within the developmental range of 0-48 months, in Texas and beyond.

Keywords: Active Learning, online learning, Penrickton Center, Perkins School for the Blind, Lilliworks, Active Learning Space, Low Incidence Disability, LID, Functional Scheme Assessment, Lilli Nielsen, Continuing Education Unit, CEU, Sensory Support Network, SSN, Community of Practice, CoP

Introductory Training Opportunities

New to Active Learning? Check out this new (free!) webinar on the Perkins School for the Blind website: "Active Learning Is More Than a Piece of Equipment!" with Charlotte Cushman and Kate Hurst <https://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webinar/active-learning-more-piece-equipment>.

This webinar provides a brief introduction to Active Learning, which is an educational approach created by Dr. Lilli Nielsen of Denmark designed for learners who are functioning below the developmental age of 48 months (4 years). Basic principles are discussed along with resources to help families and practitioners get started implementing this approach.

Deeper Training Opportunities: Active Learning Online Modules

TSBVI Outreach, in conjunction with the Perkins School for the Blind and the Penrickton Center for Blind Children, has completed a set of Active Learning online courses! These courses offer a guided, self-paced approach to becoming familiar with the massive amount of information contained on the Active Learning Space website <http://activelearningspace.org> and will help learners become familiar with the basics of Active Learning. They also offer credit (CEUs) for your time. Please go to <https://www.tsbvi.edu/course-listing> to register. These courses are provided **free of charge** at this time.

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Active Learning Update—continued

- **Active Learning: Principles (12 CEUs).** This course will give you an overview of how to implement Active Learning strategies and techniques with students in your classroom. Correctly used, Active Learning helps you provide your students with opportunities for building social and emotional skills, fine and gross motor skills, and cognitive skills.
- **Active Learning: Functional Scheme (3 CEUs).** This course will take you through the correct way to use Lilli Nielsen's Functional Scheme developmental checklist to enhance and refine your instruction for your students.
- **Active Learning: Program Planning (1.5 CEUs).** This course will show you how Active Learning can be included in the IEP, the PLAAFP, goals and objectives, addressing the ECC, aligning the IEP with the standard curriculum, placement, transition plans, and more!
- **Active Learning: Implementation (1.5 CEUs).** This course will provide guidance in using Dr. Nielsen's FIELA curriculum, classroom organization, considerations for students with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), and implementing active learning at school, home and in the community.
- **Active Learning: Documenting Progress (1 CEU).** This course will give teachers ideas for data collection formats that will provide a method for verification of students' skill acquisition.
- **Active Learning: Equipment (1.75 CEUs).** This course provides more specific information about using various pieces of equipment (both things you buy and things you can make) to meet your student's needs in developing motor, cognitive, social, emotional and perceptual skills.

- **Active Learning: Materials (1 CEU).** This course provides additional guidance about how to select the most engaging and enriching materials for your student's learning environments.

That's almost 22 CEUs you can earn while gaining information about how to provide the best instruction for your students!

Active Learning Case Studies: Student Centered Planning: Personalized Support

Free TSBVI-sponsored Active Learning Webinars were held four times in the 2019–2020 school year, and the plan is to have four more Webinars during 2020–2021. The same format will continue; they will be from 3:00–4:00 p.m. Central Time and will be held every other month.

These webinars examine specific students using the Active Learning Planning Form <http://activelearningspace.org/program-planning/active-learning-materials-and-activities-planning-sheet>, which is filled out by the student's instructional team, and videos of that same student engaged in independent as well as interactive activities. Each session requires one volunteer team to share information and video clips of one of their students. When their student or child is the subject of the webinar, we ask all team members to attend. This is a no-pressure situation in that the webinars are not recorded. Webinar participants include leading authorities in Active Learning such as Patty Obrzut, Charlotte Cushman, and Kate Hurst, who are the creators of the wonderful resource, <http://activelearningspace.org>. Attendees collaborate to design effective and

meaningful instruction using Active Learning strategies. Even if your student isn't a case study student, we encourage all members of the Active Learning Community to attend. We can all learn from discussions of each other's students!

Take advantage of this opportunity and contact Sara Kitchen kitchens@tsbvi.edu or Scott Baltisberger baltisbergers@tsbvi.edu if your team would like to feature your student during the 2020–2021 school year! To register either as a participant with a case study student or as a fellow learner in the Active Learning Community, log in at <https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/>, and search for "Active Learning Case Studies: Student Centered Planning."

Active Learning Equipment Available for Loan!

The TSBVI Tech Loan Program has ordered and received new Active Learning equipment to provide more opportunities for use by districts. These materials can be borrowed by any district in Texas for up to 3 months, free of charge. This is a great way to determine whether a particular piece of equipment is appropriate for a student prior to purchase. Available items include:

- Bead chain holder
- Essef board
- Essef board stand
- Grid holder
- HOPSA dress size 1
- HOPSA dress size 2
- HOPSA dress size 3
- HOPSA dress crossbar and link
- HOPSA dress block and tackle

- Resonance Board 4x4
- Folding resonance Board 4x4
- Small Little Room
- Full Little Room
- SPG Board
- Support Bench
- Tipping Board

For more information about these items, visit <http://activelearningspace.org> and click on the "Materials" tab and then on "Things You Can Buy." To make a tech loan request for an available item, download an application at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/technology-loan-program>, fill it out, and fax it to TSBVI Outreach, Attn: Tech Loan at 512-206-9320. Note that you will also need to provide an assistive technology evaluation that demonstrates your student's need for Active Learning equipment. Dr. Nielsen's Functional Scheme includes fine and gross motor sections which can be used for this.



A student explores a position board.

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Active Learning Update—continued

You can also find descriptions and information on purchasing Active Learning materials from LilliWorks, the only authorized dealer of these items in the United States, at their website, <https://www.lilliworks.org/> under the tab, “AL Items”. For more information, contact Sara Kitchen at kitchens@tsbvi.edu.

If you are working with one of our Active Learning Trainers in Texas, your team may qualify to access limited funds through the Sensory Support Network to purchase Active Learning materials. Talk to your trainer for more information. If you would like to connect with someone to help guide your team through the process of implementing Active Learning, contact your LID (Low Incidence Disabilities) Specialist at your Regional Education Service Center to find out if there is an Active Learning Trainer in your area.

Support for Active Learning Trainers

The Texas Sensory Support Network (Tx-SSN) <https://www.txssn.org/> has developed an online Community of Practice (CoP) for Active Learning Trainers to come together, share ideas, and support each others’ efforts in helping teams learn this valuable skill set. The first meeting was held on January 14th, 2020 from 2-3pm. Trainers were familiarized with each other as well as the online CoP. Contact Hillary Keys hkeys@esc11.net or Perkie Cannon pcannon@esc11.net if you are interested in joining our Active Learning CoP. Our goal is to keep growing Active Learning in Texas and beyond!

New postings on <http://activelearning-space.org/>

- Check out the Active Learning Space Newsletters for great information on all



A student and teacher explore tearing paper together.

things Active Learning! Topics include things you can make, training ideas, active learning for families, fine motor skills, and the list goes on! <http://activelearningspace.org/resources/active-learning-space-newsletters>

- Current Active Learning Trainers share how they get teams started on Active Learning on this new page that was recently added to Active Learning Space: <http://www.activelearningspace.org/resources/training-ideas> ◆

There's an App for That: They Are All A Dream!!!

Chris Tabb, Orientation and Mobility Supervisor, Maryland School for the Blind

Abstract: Chris Tabb's latest contribution to *TX SenseAbilities* provides information on a series of apps for iOS users from Voice Dream.

Keywords: apps, iPhone, iOS, Voice Dream, scanning, Scan Tone

There are a series of apps available for iOS users from Voice Dream that includes Voice Dream Reader, Voice Dream Writer, and now also includes Voice Dream Scanner (\$5.99; Voice Dream Suite is \$24.99 and includes all three Voice Dream apps). The scanner allows you to take a photograph of a typed document, PDF, utility bill, etc. and have it read to you. This is something that many other available apps do; the beauty of Voice Dream Scanner is the ease with which it works. The scanning can occur using the phone's camera with the phone held above a document or text, or it can import a photo from your existing photos in your camera roll. So, you might have a friend send you a picture of the menu from a restaurant they like, and you could then import the photo of the menu into Voice Dream Scanner to have it read to you.

On the main screen, the app has a large window to show what is in the phone's camera view, along with a couple of buttons at the top that allows the user to choose to enter the settings menu or to import an image

from their camera roll. The buttons on the bottom of the screen are for toggling on and off the following options: edge detection, flashlight, batch mode, and auto-capture. In the very center of the bottom row is a capture button, just as you would find on the iPhone Camera app itself. Here is a bit of description for each of the toggles.

Edge Detection: You can either have the edges detected for you by the app or you can select them on your own. You may want to select the edges manually if you are seeking to exclude some areas of print that were captured in the photograph, such as an adjoining article when photographing a newspaper story.

Flashlight: Though the cameras in iPhones continue to improve with each iteration, the flashlight can be very helpful for capturing details with print in low light settings.

Batch Mode: If you are capturing a document with multiple pages, or a single page with front and back sides that both include

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There's an App—continued

print, batch mode will allow you to have them gathered together to be read continuously. If you choose to save the images captured, they will be saved as one document with multiple pages.

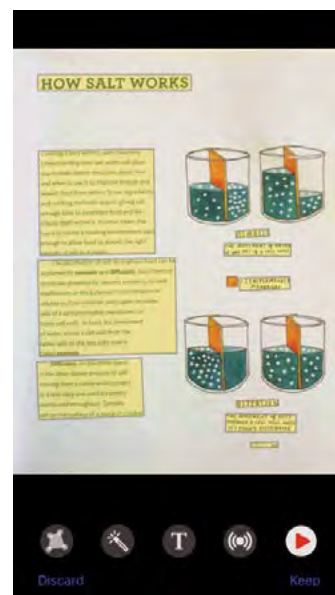
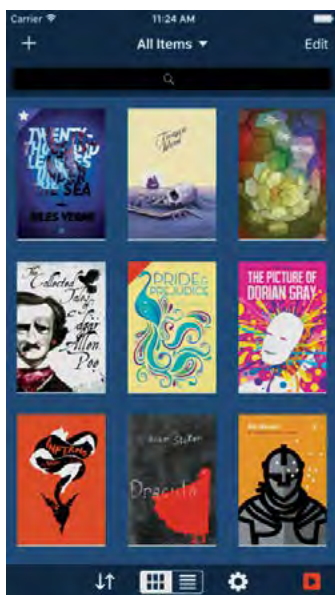
Auto-capture: This feature allows you to bring the document into the view of the camera and the app will take a picture of the document without you having to press the capture button manually.

Once the image is captured you can have it read to you by pressing the play button or you can drag your finger over the document to have whatever is below your finger read. There are also settings to change the speaking voice, rate of speech, and the language. Voice Dream Scanner allows you to choose whether you want to keep the scan or discard it. If you choose to keep the scan, options to export include:

- Save To Voice
- Dream Reader,
- Save As A PDF
- File, Save As A Text File,
- and Copy Text.

You can find a few other features in the settings menu that can make the process of capturing images of text and having them read automatically even easier. Turning on “ScanTone” provides a tone for feedback about the amount of text in the camera’s view, alignment of the edges, etc. With ScanTone, the louder the sound the better your scan will be. You can also choose to have the text read automatically when scanning rather than choosing “Done” after capturing an image.

Happy Scanning! ◆



Screenshots of the App Store Preview for iOS Voice Dream.

BELONGING TO A TEAM

Emily Coleman, Superintendent, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)

Abstract: TSBVI's Superintendent describes activities of the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind (SCASB).

Keywords: South Central Association of Schools for the Blind, SCASB, sports, wrestling, cheerleading, competition



TSBVI cheerleaders practice in the school gym alongside cheerleaders from other participating schools.

TSBVI recently held the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind (SCASB) performing arts, cheerleading, and wrestling competition. We host this particular event once every six years. Schools participate with us from Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma. Being new to the south, I had not yet been introduced to this exclusive group. After months of preparation, TSBVI put on an exceptional event.

While sitting in the stands, I was overwhelmed with pride to belong to the TSBVI team. Our students not only encouraged and cheered for each other, but also for athletes and friends from other schools. There

was a family wearing matching homemade t-shirts sitting just below me waiting for their athlete to step onto the wrestling mat. When he did, all four of them pulled out their phones and iPads to record the moment. They had patiently waited all day to document this moment...in four different ways. This image highlighted the event's importance for me.

Aside from the TSBVI team, I felt instantly as though we all belonged to a bigger team, which was SCASB. There was a collegial spirit recognized and championed by our six schools and each of us contributed to the success of the weekend. It wasn't only

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Belonging to a Team—continued

about who would win each competition, but more about providing opportunities for our students to shine and feel part of a larger team themselves.

As we look to the future of TSBVI, I continue to see a culture with an increased focus on empowering students, encouraging them to push themselves, to set greater goals, and to surpass their own expectations. It isn't only about what they bring to a competition or a performance. It's mostly about what they bring to a culture and a community. Our Wildcats bring many positive traits, which not only encourage a sense of belonging for their peers on our campus, but also open the door so that all professionals, families, and students throughout Texas can belong too. ♦



The bleachers are full of cheering fans at a SCASB wrestling match

Guidelines and Standards for Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas

Since 2008, the Guidelines and Standards resource has provided educators and family members with a framework with which to review the quality of their instructional programs. It is available for download in both English and Spanish and is updated after each legislative session by the Texas Action Committee for the Education of Students with Visual Impairment. The most current version is dated 2017; a new 2020 edition will be released soon. Look for it at <https://www.tsbvi.edu/guidelines-and-standards-vi>.

Students with visual impairments have unique learning needs that must be addressed in order to develop independence and productive, lifelong skills. The document outlines twelve standards, along with how they should be implemented in a quality program, and relevant current laws, rules and regulations for the state of Texas. Particular attention is paid to the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC), instructional areas beyond the core curriculum that must be addressed to meet needs directly related to vision impairment (TEC 30.002).

The Guidelines and Standards supports the development of high quality programs and services for students with visual impairments. Administrators can learn about specialized personnel, materials, equipment and educational settings to ensure appropriate individualized educational program planning. This knowledge is also key for parents and caregivers so that they can advocate for appropriate services to meet the needs of their child.

Older Individuals Who Are Blind Program: A Treasured Resource for Older Texans

Tim Spong, Program Specialist for Independent Living Services—Older Individuals Who are Blind, Texas Workforce Commission

Abstract: Tim Spong, with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), describes the Older Individuals Who are Blind Program (OIB) for people who are 55 or older and are experiencing vision loss.

Keywords: elderly, macular degeneration, in-home services, confidence, independence, quality of life, Older Individuals Who are Blind specialists, OIB, ILS-OIB, Centers for Independent Living

Do you know someone who is elderly and losing vision—maybe a family member, someone at church or a friend or neighbor? Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (ILS-OIB) is an often overlooked program available through the Texas Workforce Commission that helps people regain their independence and improve their quality of life. As Anna's story demonstrates, the program had a positive impact in her daily living.

With confidence in her step, Anna makes her way to her mailbox to check her mail. It's hard to believe that just two weeks ago, she needed her neighbor to take her mail right to her doorstep for her. Anna is delighted to be outside and able to retrieve her mail once again! What a great feeling she has—a feeling of confidence—a victory in overcoming challenges with her independence.

A few months ago, as her eyesight deteriorated due to Macular Degeneration, Anna began to stay inside of her home

and relied on others to assist her in living independently. However, she learned about the Older Individuals Who are Blind/Visually Impaired program (OIB) through a friend of hers at church. As a result, she met her OIB worker and together they identified the goods and services that could contribute to overcoming barriers she was facing with her visual limitations. With planning and information she received from her OIB worker, it was decided that she could benefit from Orientation and Mobility training, Independent Living Skills training and assistive technology (a video magnifier). These goods and services have had a profound impact not only on Anna's life, but the lives of many older Texans with visual impairments.

Vision loss happens frequently as we age and can affect the independent living of older individuals.

The OIB program provides seniors aged 55 or older who have blindness or visual im-

(cont.)

NEWS AND VIEWS

Older Individuals Who Are Blind Program—continued

pairment with the tools and training needed to maintain their freedom, confidence, daily life at home, and participation in the community.

Located throughout the state, the OIB program's blind services specialists can provide in-home services that help seniors like Anna to acquire skills in orientation and mobility, receive assistive technology devices such as magnification tools or braille instruction, diabetes education, or retraining on how to perform everyday activities such as meal preparation and identifying medications—all geared toward overcoming challenges related to vision loss.

OIB's blind services specialists are active in community events such as senior fairs and work closely with medical providers. They routinely partner with the Centers for Independent Living (CILS) and Texas Health and Human Services since they also provide services for seniors with other types of challenges in living independently that are not related to vision loss.

The ILS-OIB program made a difference for Anna and can have a positive impact on others who need this type of support. If you know someone who needs these services, please contact:

Texas Workforce Solutions- Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Call: 800-628-5115
- Email: customers@twc.state.tx.us.

Website: <https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/assistive-services-providers/centers-independent-living-cil>



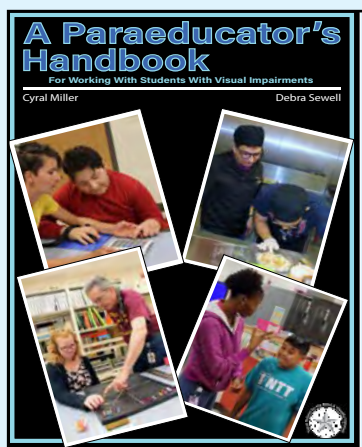
A woman uses a hand-held magnifier to read a book.

A federally funded program, the ILS-OIB Program is administered, along with Vocational Rehabilitation, under the Rehabilitation Services Administration. In Texas, these programs are now housed and managed under the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind Program, Federal funds paid 90 percent of the total costs incurred under the program. In Federal fiscal year 2020, the agency received \$2,159,283 in Federal grant funds for this program. Funds appropriated by the State paid 10 percent (\$239,920) of the total costs incurred under the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (ILS-OIB) program. ◆

New Publications From the Curriculum Department!

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/tsbvi-publications>

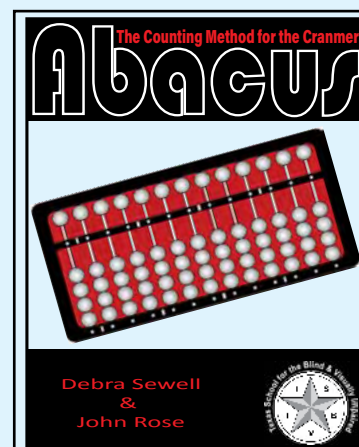


A Paraeducator's Handbook for Working with Students with Visual Impairments, 2nd Edition

Authors: Cyral Miller and Debra Sewell (Eds.)
(2019), 127 pp.

This publication provides information regarding the paraeducator's unique role in educational programming for students with visual impairments. Included are:

- Chapters addressing Social Interaction and Self-Determination Skills, Independent Living Skills, Orientation and Mobility Skills, Assistive Technology, other areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC), Adapting Learning Materials, and Working with Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments
- The paraeducator's role in these areas of instruction
- Suggestions for working with students
- Resources for Adapted Materials and Equipment
- Print Resources



The Counting Method for the Cranmer Abacus

Authors: Debra Sewell & John Rose
(2019), 204 pp.

The Cranmer Abacus is a mathematical tool used for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, decimals, and fractions.

For the student with a visual impairment, the abacus is comparable to the sighted student's pencil and paper and should be considered a fundamental component of math instruction.

The Counting Method for the Cranmer Abacus emphasizes the understanding of place value, outlines the importance of this mathematical tool, and gives step-by-step instructions for completion of sample problems using the counting method.

Texas Workforce Commission's

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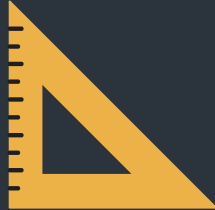
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*For inquiries, please call Marlo Mrak (512) 377-0549,
email marlo.mrak@twc.state.tx.us -OR- Daniel Walker
(512) 377-0349, email daniel.walker@twc.state.tx.us*

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Ann Adkins - *Editor-in-Chief*

adkinsa@tsbvi.edu

Cyral Miller - *Editor*

millerc@tsbvi.edu

Kathi Garza - *Family Wisdom Editor*

garzak@tsbvi.edu

Sara Kitchen - *Effective Practices Editor*

kitchens@tsbvi.edu

Adam Graves - *Effective Practices Editor*

gravesa@tsbvi.edu

Juanita Barker - *News & Views Editor*

juanita.barker@twc.state.tx.us

Julie Johnson - *News & Views Editor*

julie.johnson@twc.state.tx.us

Suzanne Becker - *Proofreader and Archivist*

beckers@tsbvi.edu

Melanie Schacht - *Assistant to the Editor*

schachtm@tsbvi.edu

Steven Landry - *Print and Website Production*

landrys@tsbvi.edu

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www.tsbvi.edu/tx-senseabilities

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To request a notice by email when a new edition is published on the web or to unsubscribe by mail, please contact Melanie Schacht at schachtm@tsbvi.edu

If you have an idea for an article that you think would be great for *TX SenseAbilities*, please send an email to one of the section editors. We would love to hear your ideas.



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Programs

www.tsbvi.edu | 512-454-8631 | 1100 W. 45th St. | Austin, TX 78756



Texas Health and Human Services Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/blind-visually-impaired/blind-childrens-vocational-discovery-development-program> 1-877-787-8999



Texas Workforce Commission

<https://twc.texas.gov/> 1-800-628-5115



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The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily express the position of the United States Department of Education.