

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

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Message from the editor



Kathleen Farrand, Ph.D.

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I am thrilled to share with you the Spring 2017, Convention Issue of the *Visual Impairments and Deafblind Education Quarterly* journal. This issue is a favorite of mine each year. I always enjoy remembering the fun we had at convention and sharing what our amazing members in DVIDB are doing to further the field of visual impairments and deafblindness.

This issue begins with articles highlighting this year's award winners in the field of VI and DB. I was honored to be the recipient of the Dissertation of the Year award, and humbled by the many accomplishments of the other award winners featured in this issue. The DVIDB Social was a lovely event that could not have been possible without the tireless work of board member, Nicole Johnson, and our fabulous sponsors and members. The cover is a picture of the beautiful cakes donated for the event by APH.

The next 3 articles are summaries of a few of this year's presentations from Convention. First, you will learn more about professional development delivery from the past and into the present for those working with students that are blind, deafblind, visually impaired, and have multiple disabilities. The next article

article focuses on strategies for teaching English Language Learners who are visually impaired academic vocabulary and abstract concepts. The issue concludes with an article on implementation and results on transition programming for youth with visual impairments.

I hope you enjoy reliving this year's convention or reading up on some of the great things you missed in the field of VI and DB. Now we can all begin our countdown for next year's annual convention and expo in Tampa, Florida, which is less than a year away. In the meantime, please feel free to email me and share some notable things you are up to this year in the field of VI or DB for an upcoming issue.

It's Easier than Ever to Be Part of Our Family

If you are passionate about the education of children and youth with visual impairments and deafblindness, including those with additional disabilities, please become part of our social network on Facebook. If you have a Facebook account, you can find our page and become a fan by searching for Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness. For those who do not have a Facebook account, you can view your page by going to the following URL:

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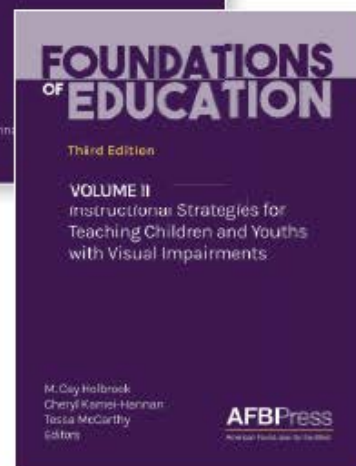
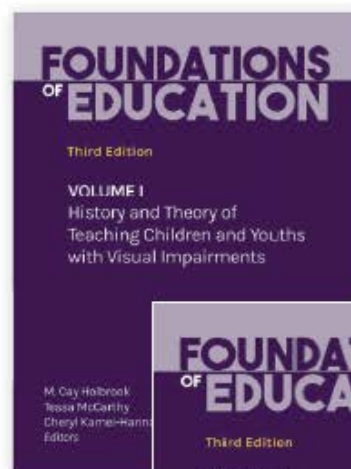
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President's message



Tiffany Wild, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, The Ohio State University,

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I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped to make this past convention so successful. Much effort went into planning special opportunities for our board and for our members. Thank you to Amy Parker for working with Perkins School for the Blind to arrange our board meeting, lunch, and tour. We appreciate and thank Perkins for their hospitality. It was great to get off the convention grounds, to visit where so many students are educated daily, visit the museum, and learn about the innovative programs at Perkins. Thank you to Amy and Nicole Johnson for securing our sponsors, working on the social, and the teacher/intervener forum. Thank you Amy for working hard with your committee to select wonderful presentations that represented such a wide range of expertise. Thank you to Karen Koehler for working with the students at the Ohio State School for the Blind on our awards and getting them shipped to convention as well as travelling with our division banner for the Expo Hall. I want to thank Deborah Hatton and her committee for getting our division ready for the standards meetings that took place at convention. Last, but not least, thank you to all of our sponsors for their monetary time and donations to make our convention so nice for our members. We could never do the extra special events for our members without you. THANK YOU!

As I returned from convention, I first reflected on our board meeting. We need more help with our division activities. It became evident that we need to ask for help from our membership. As Helen Keller

said, “Alone we can do little; together we can do so much”. Embracing that value, I will be sending out information about the many committees that our members can join and information on how to get more involved with CEC. Please be looking for this information very soon. Thank you to the board members and current committee members that have worked so tirelessly to make our division so great.

I then reflected on the presentations. So many wonderful people presented great content to represent our division. I learned so much from so many of you. One drawback from being in leadership is the numerous outside meetings that I need to attend, but those sessions I could attend were great. We had some great attendance numbers this year. Thank you to all those who presented and shared their expertise. Many of those presenters have shared their knowledge in the pages of this edition of the “Q” so that those that could not attend convention can share in their knowledge and expertise.

Finally, as I sat and thought about what to do next, a knot began to form in my stomach. We need to begin to plan for next year. Our next convention is in Tampa in February! That is less than a year away! Sessions have already been proposed, speakers are beginning to be lined up, and we need to begin our social planning. Elections and call for awards will happen much earlier this year due to this quick turnaround. Please be on the lookout for this important election and award nominations. The elections will also contain a special item on the ballot about our constitution.

Tiffany Wild

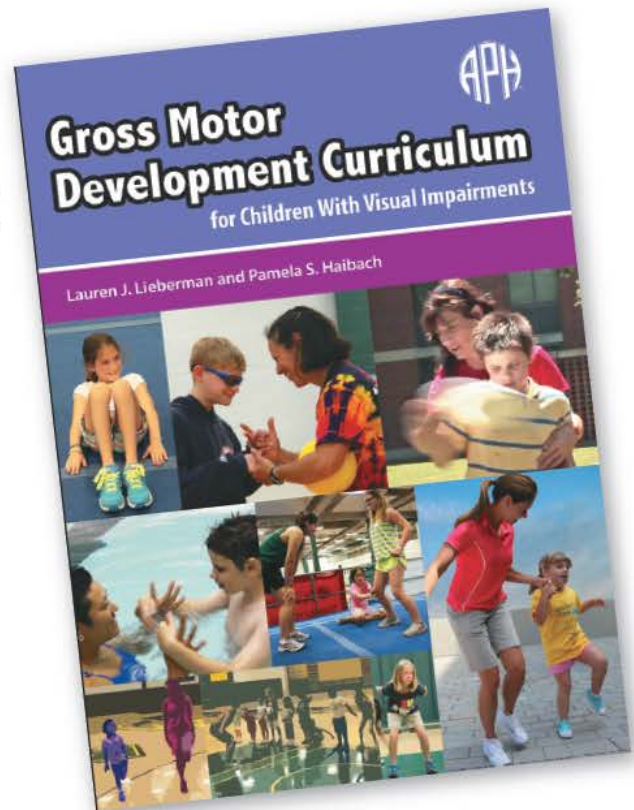
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**Karen Koehler,
The Ohio State University**

**Council for Exceptional Children
Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
Presents 2017 Awards
at International Conference in Boston, MA**

The Council for Exceptional Children Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness is proud to present the *Virginia M. Sowell Student of the Year Award* to Karen Koehler at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in Boston, MA. on April 20, 2017.

The *Virginia M. Sowell Student of the Year Award* recognizes a student who demonstrates a commitment to the education and/or rehabilitation of individuals with visual impairments and deafblindness. The award was named after Dr. Virginia Sowell whose lifetime contributions to the profession impacted the lives of numerous educators and countless children and adults with visual impairments and deafblindness.

Karen is currently a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. She is an exceptional student who places a lot of thought and attention to detail in her coursework. Karen is not afraid to ask questions and provide insights to the current teaching profession in the field of visual impairments during class sessions. New doctoral students have commented on how much they reach out to Karen for advice in their current doctoral studies. She is always willing to provide advice and support for incoming students.



**Dr. Kathleen Farrand,
Arizona State University**

**Council for Exceptional Children
Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
Presents 2017 Awards
at International Conference in Boston, MA**

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Dissertation of the Year Award* to Dr. Kathleen Farrand at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in Boston, MA. on April 20, 2017. The *Dissertation of the Year Award* is presented to a DVIDB member who makes a significant contribution to the field through extensive study and research.

Dr. Farrand provides a unique perspective on teaching methodologies that can benefit the learning and development of literary constructs for students with visual impairments. Kathleen's work redefined inclusive environments through work with dramatic inquiry for literacy learning. The methodology used in this work is very limited to our field.

Kathleen's examination of inclusion and what it means for a student to be part of an inclusive environment is noteworthy. Her work in this area was sought after for a chapter in an upcoming book in science education in inclusive environments. Editors invited her to write on the topic of inclusion.

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**Paula Tapia,
Baldwin County Public School System**

**Council for Exceptional Children
Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
Presents 2017 Awards
at International Conference in Boston, MA**

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Teacher of the Year Award* to Ms. Paula Tapia at the Council for Exceptional Children and Expo in Boston, MA. on April 20, 2017. Ms. Tapia is a creative and caring TVI and COMS in the Baldwin County Schools in Alabama. She has many years of teaching experience and has the exceptional ability to address each student as an individual. Every lesson, whether from a TVI or O&M standpoint, is specifically designed for that individual student. She has never incorporated the cookie cutter approach to her teaching.

She takes extra time to communicate with parents or guardians about the specific accomplishments and needs of each of her students. Extra communication also occurs with her students. She incorporates the interests and goals of her students into each lesson. Parents and administrators love and support Ms. Tapia.

The *Teacher of the Year Award* recognizes a person who is exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and a skilled certified Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, deafblind or COMS, in any state approved or accredited day or specialized school, who serves students who are VI and/or DB ages birth through 21, with or without additional disabilities. It is the highest award presented to education professionals within the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness.

Ms. Tapia is not only described as an exceptional student in her local school system, but also in the university setting as an adjunct professor. She was best described by one of her graduate students, who is now her co-worker, as someone who gives 110% to each of her students, whether they are in a K-12 setting, or college setting. She has extremely high expectations, but remains realistic in such a way that her students make amazing progress. When presented with a challenge, Paula continually thinks outside of the box and comes up with creative solutions. If her idea doesn't work for a given student, she persistently presents a new strategy, which is quite often even better and more creative than the previous strategies.

Ms. Tapia is currently involved in several research studies to improve strategies in O&M. She has presented her findings at several conferences. She also supports her professional organizations through continued membership in DVIDB and AER.



**Linda Alsop,
Director Deafblind Programs
SKI-HI Institute/Center for Person with Disabilities
Utah State University**

**Council for Exceptional Children
Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
Presents 2017 Awards
at International Conference in Boston, MA.**

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Exemplary Advocate Award* to Ms. Linda Alsop at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in Boston, MA. on April 20, 2017. The *Exemplary Advocate Award* honors an individual whose personal and professional activities have significantly promoted and improved quality of life for people with visual impairments and deafblindness.

Ms. Alsop has over 25 years of experience working with individuals who are deafblind. She has directed many federal projects, including most recently, three OSEP-funded projects, Project SPARKLE (a Model Demonstration Project for providing parent access to training on deafblindness via DVD and Internet technology in the home), Project PRIIDE (a Steppingstones of Technology Project to create simulations of vision and hearing loss using DVD technology), and Project RIITE (a Project of National Significance, for developing a DVD series on deafblind information and simulations). She was also the Project Director for a federal grant funded by FIPSE (Funds for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) entitled Consortium for National Paraprofessional Training in Deafblindness: A Model for Distance Education in Community Colleges. With this grant, she developed and implemented the first preservice online coursework in deafblindness for interveners (paraprofessionals) serving children and youth with deafblindness. This coursework won the Blackboard Greenhouse Exemplary Course Award, which recognized it as one of the top 10 online courses in the country.

Ms. Alsop served as a Clinical Professor of the Sensory Impaired Early Intervention Master's Degree Program, a Personnel Preparation grant. She was recently the principal investigator of Project STRIPES, a Paraprofessional Preservice Program Improvement grant, through which she developed new coursework, teaches deafblind courses and advises, coaches, and supervises students in that area.

She has extensive experience as a practitioner working with children and youth with deafblindness. She has developed numerous curricular and training materials for use by professionals including curriculum and DVDs/videotapes related to deafblindness. She has worked closely with the Utah State Office of Education and the Utah State Legislature in systems change and in obtaining state funding for services to children and youth who are deafblind. She is recognized nationally for her development of curriculum and training and technical assistance in deafblindness. Outside of her position, she advocates nationally for children with deafblindness and works to insure individuals receive appropriate services. She received the President's Award from the Hadley School for the Blind in 2008. Currently, she leads the National Intervener Task force and is actively involved in national system's change efforts.

Ms. Alsop has had an exemplary career that has focused on promoting the quality of life for individuals with

deafblindness. She has done this by ensuring that staff who provide services to children with deafblindness have appropriate skills, by helping parents learn more about the disability and how to enhance quality of life, by advocating for individuals with deafblindness, and by working to improve legislation that impacts on the life of individuals with deafblindness. She is clearly deserving of this award.



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**Dr. Deborah Hatton,
Vanderbilt University**

Council for Exceptional Children

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at International Conference in Boston, MA.

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Distinguished Service Award* to Dr. Deborah Hatton at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in Boston, MA. on April 20, 2017. Dr. Hatton is Associate Professor of Special Education and Director of the Program in Visual Disabilities at Vanderbilt University, Peabody College.

The *Distinguished Service Award* is presented to a DVIDB member who provides exemplary

leadership and commitment to the field through service, education, and research. Dr. Hatton received this prestigious award because she has been an outstanding leader in this field for over 20 years in higher education and before that she was a general education teacher, itinerant teacher of students with visual impairments, and an administrator of programs for typically developing students and students with visual impairments. She also established early intervention programs for the Governor Morehead School for the Blind as well as served on their board for 12 years.

She has written numerous articles in early intervention, children with multiple disabilities, and behavioral phenotype research with students with visual impairments. Deborah has chaired or co-chaired the enrichment committees for the NLCSD program, and is forever offering advice and support to her students at Vanderbilt University, as well as other scholars in the NLCSD program. She wants to ensure that the field continues to grow and make strides in providing excellent services for students with visual impairments.

For the past, at least 4 years, Deborah has chaired the position paper committee for DVIDB. As a result of her pushing for current research and pressing deadlines, DVIDB has 3 current position papers, and a few more in the pipeline. She is committed to seeing that our field has reliable information that can guide decisions and policy-making efforts.

This past year Deborah has chaired the efforts to update the TVI training standards. This is a monumental task. She has conference calls monthly, and sometimes more, to ensure that the standards are being revised in a transparent method with as much input from the field as possible. The amount of time and effort for this work is immeasurable and the impact will forever change the way that all personnel preparation institutions train teachers of students with visual impairments.

Deborah is a true mentor to all who come across her path. She is true champion for our field.

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Mary C. Zatta, Ph.D., Director of Professional Development, Training and Educational Resources Program, Perkins School for the Blind, Mary.Zatta@Perkins.org

Betsy McGinnity, Executive Director, Training and Educational Resources Program, Perkins School for the Blind, Betsy.mcginnity@perkins.org

Since its founding in 1829, Perkins has had as one of its core missions to be the teachers of teachers. Initially this involved having a teacher and student come together to campus for a year-long training program. Later this evolved to include formal partnerships with Boston University and Boston College. For the past twenty years, Perkins has been involved in providing professional development to educators who work with children who are blind, deafblind, visually impaired and who have multiple disabilities beginning with teachers in New England and, with the advent of Perkins eLearning, extending to teachers throughout the US and beyond.

The need for professional development (PD) for these educators has remained constant. Often teachers working in public schools and/or as itinerants are quite isolated. They cannot get the PD they need through their local school districts. They need to stay current with developments in the field, training in new technologies and teaching techniques, medical advancements and the changing nature of the schools age population with vision loss.

With the onset of education reform and a focus on student outcomes as well as the requirements for teachers to be highly qualified, the effectiveness of different kinds of PD has been examined. Research shows that effective PD “engages teachers in learning opportunities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally-focused, collaborative, and ongoing” (Hunzicker, 2010, p. 177). The Institute for the Advancement of Research in Education at AEL (2004) found that effective PD is focused on what teachers teach and gives them the

knowledge and skills they need to help students succeed. Gurskey and Yoon (2009) did a comprehensive analysis of 1,343 studies examining the effectiveness of PD. They found only 9 studies that met the standards of credible evidence. Among the results in these studies were findings that workshops and summer institutes can, in fact, be effective if they focus on research-based instructional practices, involve active learning for participants and allow teachers to adapt what they learn to their own classroom circumstances. Gurskey and Yoon also found that PD that involves the use of an outside expert whose presentation was research-based and included activity-based learning in their workshops were critical features. They also found that extending the time spent on workshop content with follow up activities and technical assistance helped make them more effective.

The Need for Training

Brain-based visual impairment (also known as cortical visual impairment and cerebral visual impairment / CVI) is the most common form of visual impairment in developing countries today (American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus /AAPOS). It is estimated that up to 70% of school-age students in the United States have a brain-based visual impairment which will be referred to as CVI in this article.

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a decreased visual response due to a neurological problem affecting the visual part of the brain. Typically, a child with CVI has a normal eye exam or has an eye condition that cannot account for the abnormal visual behavior. CVI is caused by damage to the visual part of the brain. Examples of such damage include: stroke, decreased blood supply, decreased oxygenation, brain malformation or infection, hydrocephalus, seizure, metabolic disease, head trauma and other neurologic disorders. A diagnosis of CVI must be made by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist or pediatric neurologist).

Diagnosis of CVI really began to appear in the 1990s. Initially named “Cortical Blindness” it was thought that there was no potential for improvement. Today we know differently. Children with CVI benefit from instruction to improve their visual skills and behaviors. “Instruction in visual skills can be accomplished

through (1) changes to the visual environment, (2) direct instruction in visual attending skills, and (3) visually dependent task instruction (Lueck & Dutton, 2015, p. 508-510).

However, despite the fact that we know that intervention is critical and can make a significant difference in a child's ability to use his/her vision, there remains a significant shortage of professionals who are trained sufficiently to meet the intervention needs. The skills needed by teachers in order to provide effective interventions for students with CVI are quite different from the skills needed when teaching students with ocular visual impairment. Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Teachers of the Deafblind typically have not had extensive training in their preservice programs in this regard.

Some teachers have been lucky enough to work in a district that has recognized the need for training and has provided it for their staff. Others have been fortunate to be able to access training because their geographic and/or financial situation (live near training sites, have the funds to pay for the training themselves) allows them to. Therefore, amongst the teachers there is a wide range of ability in terms of working with children with CVI – from those who are quite skilled (few) and those who have had little to no training (most).

Perkins-Roman CVI Range Endorsement

As a means of identifying teachers who have achieved a level of expertise sufficient to conduct The CVI Range®, we have developed a program to help teachers achieve the Perkins-Roman CVI Range Endorsement. Individuals who achieve the Perkins-Roman CVI Range Endorsement have demonstrated competency in conducting The CVI Range®. Perkins recommends that all students with CVI have at least one member of their team who has received the endorsement. We also believe that the student must have a TVI on the team (in many cases this may be the same person).

Attaining the endorsement involves:

1. Submitting an application that demonstrates your experience in working with students with CVI

2. Taking an online test or completing our online class on CVI taught by Dr. Christine Roman
3. Appropriate scoring of two videos in which Dr. Roman is assessing a student
4. Submission of three letters of support including at least 1 from a parent and 1 from a professional colleague or administrator.

Formats for Training

Perkins training opportunities include online classes, onsite workshops, and blended workshops (a combination of onsite/face to face and online). In addition, training content ranges in scope from basic information to high level / intense training. Trainings provide professional development or continuing education credits as well as micro-credentials. Earning micro-credentials puts the participant on the path to the endorsement. Three micro-credentials are required to earn the endorsement: CVI Basics, CVI Proficiency, and CVI Assessment. Each micro-credential is competency-based and once earned, indicates that the participant has demonstrated the knowledge and skills identified for that micro-credential.

The micro-credentials and the endorsement are digital “badges” (images) which contain metadata indicating the specific competencies that the participant has demonstrated. These digital images can be used in an email signature, a LinkedIn account, a resume, etc. as a means of articulating the individual’s experience and expertise.

Those needing an introductory level of training can earn the CVI Basics Micro-credential by participating in an onsite training or a self-paced tutorial. Perkins recommends that all members of a child’s team have at least this level of training.

For those individuals who are ready for an intermediate level of training leading up to the endorsement, we offer online and blended classes. Professionals who engage in this level of training will earn a CVI Proficiency Micro-credential if they complete the work in a satisfactory manner. This level of training puts the individual on the track for earning the endorsement.

Based on feedback from the field, we have learned that many teachers are asking for a deeper level of training and opportunities to practice conducting the range in order to hone their skills. As a result, we are adding two new online classes to our catalog on the topic of CVI as follows:

1. CVI Complexity – taught by Matt Tietjen, M.Ed., and which will provide a CVI Complexity Micro-credential, and
2. CVI Range Practice – taught by Dr. Sandra Newcomb and which will provide a CVI Range Practice Micro-credential.

In summary, Perkins has examined the needs related to CVI training and developed a range of options to provide professionals with access to training. Online training has enabled so many individuals to obtain knowledge and skills that were previously only delivered in an onsite format. At the same time, the onsite format is still relevant and often preferred and, adding an online component serves to extend the learning. Multiple formats and multiple solutions seem to be one of the ways we can meet the needs related to CVI training. The needs are great, the population is growing and being part of a solution is a good place to be.

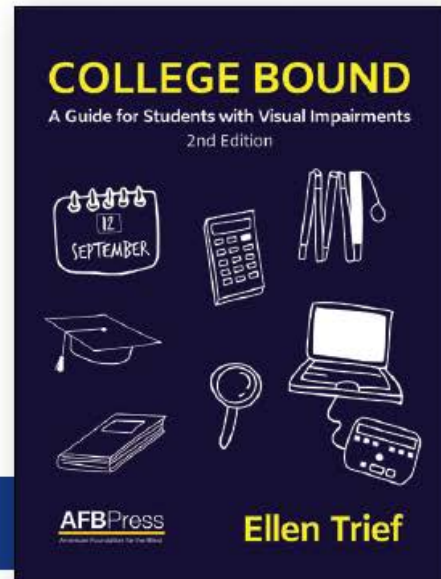
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By Ellen Trief



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In 2014, 4.6 million students, or 9.4% of the public school student population, were English as a second Language Learners (ELLs) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). As the United States becomes more diverse each year, the overall number of students who are ELLs is expected to increase. Conroy (2005) asserts that given the increase in the number of ELLs in special education, it is reasonable to assume that ELLs who are also visually impaired will too increase. Teachers may find ELLs with visual impairments a challenge when they are adapting materials for the diverse learners in their classrooms. Most have had little, if any, experience with English Language Learners with visual impairments. Some may falsely assume that these learners are unlikely to be successful in the classroom or are at risk for not mastering the standards (Kocyigit & Artar, 2015). Kocyigit and Artar (2015) state that learning differences can have an enormous effect on the classroom environment. Therefore, it is necessary to provide support to the teachers of ELLs with visual impairments on how to best meet their students' needs and promote success.

Best practices for students with visual impairments emphasize using verbal instruction. Students with visual impairments often have gaps in background knowledge and vocabulary due to their impairment. Those with severe visual impairments may not be able to learn through casual observation. While a sighted toddler can look over from the kitchen table to see their mother cooking and observe pots, pans, oven mitts, etc. a child with a severe visual impairment has no knowledge of these objects unless they are directly exposed to them. For ELLs, there is a heavy reliance on using visual media, such as pictures and gestures to support instruction and broaden their understanding of semantics, a strategy that is unlikely to work with ELLs

with visual impairments. This creates a conundrum, as what are known to be the best practices for each subgroup of students does not work well for ELLs with visual impairments. Subsequently, we looked for other approaches to support student learning and vocabulary development, with as many concrete activities as possible. This article focuses specifically on strategies to teach academic vocabulary and abstract concepts to ELLs who are visually impaired.

It is important to strengthen students' underlying vocabulary and teach them unfamiliar words. With students who are ELLs with visual impairments, sometimes it is difficult to determine the gaps in language development. An example of this occurred quite by chance. Maria, an ELL with a visual impairment in a 4th grade classroom, answered the question "Who was Benjamin Franklin?" She replied, "Benjamin Franklin invented a lot of things. His picture is on money. He signed the declaration of independence. He discovered electricity by flying a kite in the rain with a key." Maria had answered the question quickly and correctly, but her teacher had a feeling it was a rote response. "What is a kite?" her teacher asked. "I don't know," Maria replied. "Why would there be electricity in a thunderstorm?" her teacher asked. Maria replied "I don't know," again. "Why was there a key on the kite, and where did he put it on the kite?" Maria shook her head. "I don't know."

This example demonstrates how crucial it is to predetermine the essential vocabulary students must know to understand the lesson. Miller (2006) explains it is important to avoid making assumptions about what a student knows or about what experiences they have had. She asserts "Assessing prior knowledge is essential to tailoring instruction to individual students' needs" (p. 63). Simply administering a K-W-L chart (K - Know: what does the student know, W - What: what does the student want to know, and L - Learn: what has the student learned) can be a valuable assessment prior to instruction that helps to tailor lessons to students' needs. While Miller's work focuses on students with learning disabilities, it is easily applicable to students with visual impairments. The following strategies can help teachers when planning instruction for building background knowledge.

Concrete Experiences using Manipulatives and Realia

Using realia (objects and materials from everyday life used as teaching aids) is an excellent way to support ELLs with visual impairments. Realia is the physical or concrete object or a close approximation that will help students build their background knowledge. While an ELL might learn about bugles by looking at a picture of one a Civil War soldier is holding, an ELL with a visual impairment needs something less abstract. The actual object is best, but a model can be used so students can physically manipulate and explore the construct being introduced. Ideally, this model will have as many similarities to the actual object as possible - including size and scale. However, the most important qualities are those that are key to the complete concept of what is being represented (Bentzen & Marston, 2010). For example, a toy bugle that is metal and hollow speaks volumes more about the original object compared to one that is plastic and solid. Models with qualities that differ from the real thing can be used, but be sure to discuss which attributes are inconsistent. A real bugle, for example, has a mouthpiece that can be used to perform music and is much larger than the 2-inch model on your desk.

Conroy (2005) supports learning where students use all of their senses. Subsequently, listening to a recording of a bugle helps to solidify its purpose as an instrument and opens the door for discussion about how the soldiers used the bugle for not only entertainment but communication. Conroy notes that “the use of realia involves advanced planning by the teacher to identify and gather the objects to be used during the lesson” (p. 104). Accompanying teaching of vocabulary with concrete experiences helps ELLs with visual impairments comprehend and retain information.

Brawand and Johnson (2016) posit that teachers can start with real objects, and in many cases, transition to models, then finally two dimensional representations. They note “it is necessary to teach students specific strategies for working with graphics” in order to “assist the students in building a greater understanding of visual mathematical concepts that otherwise would be misunderstood” (Brawand & Johnson, 2016, para. 2). Additionally, the use of tactile graphics and manipulatives can provide children with visual impairments

the concrete experience to help them understand the same concepts as their sighted peers in the classroom setting. Math vocabulary (like seriate, compare and match) can be taught with geometric shapes of different sizes, shapes and textures, which allows students to “more easily remember what they did and explain concepts” (Brawand & Johnson, 2016, para. 2).

Active Engagement

Roseberry-McKibbin (2014) notes that for students who are at risk for learning difficulties, it is imperative to provide multiple exposures to words while actively engaging them in the process. While holding a bugle provides information about shape, texture, size, and weight, the recording provides an additional layer of what the bugle sounds like. Allowing a student to actively engage with the bugle lets him or her experience how difficult a bugle is to play and how it would take considerable practice to be able to play a song. The student is unlikely to forget the experience, nor the learning that went along with it. Thus, experience of the active engagement helps solidify the concepts and vocabulary being taught. Kashdan and Barnes (as cited in Kocyigit & Artar, 2015) state that students who are blind and visually impaired benefit from combining vocabulary and activity because it enables them to learn by associating language with body movement and experience.

One way to help students actively engage with language, according to Biemiller (2003), is to connect new learning with prior knowledge. One way that we have done so is through purposefully incorporating Tier 2 vocabulary into everyday learning and activities. Tier 1 words are those that most students pick up incidentally. Tier 2 vocabulary are high frequency words used in many domains and contexts. Tier 3 words require explicit direct instruction and are tied to specific domains and contexts (¡Colorín colorado!, 2017). For example, when participating in cooking activities, vocabulary can be introduced by substituting terms, like “add a sparse amount of salt” instead of add a pinch of salt, or “equally distributing” cookies to classmates rather than passing them out.

Expanding Vocabulary through Verbal Games and Activities

Teaching vocabulary through exposure to words can be accomplished in several ways. Nelson, Vadasy and Sanders (2011) suggest utilizing a cloze procedure, where students fill in the blank. It requires students to use words in the correct context. Topor and Rosenblum (2013) encourage the use of story generation. Students, using their own words, generate stories based on their own experiences, which can provide insight into not only background knowledge, but how they utilize expressive vocabulary. We have also based activities on the Fancy Nancy book series (also available as an app). In *Fancy Nancy and Late, Late, LATE Night*, Fancy Nancy says “Here we are having tea on the veranda. (That’s a fancy word for porch).” A similar activity can be completed on a higher reading level using the book series *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Snicket, 1999), as the author quite frequently introduces words or concepts and then explains them: “Klaus sighed, and relinquished - a word which here means “gave to Count Olaf even though he didn’t want to” - the book on nuptial law” or “Only Violet didn’t cry, but merely trembled with fear and revulsion, a word which here means “an unpleasant mixture of horror and disgust.” These types of activities allow the student to playfully engage with expanding his or her vocabulary. Another activity, word sorting, includes ranking words that have generally the same meaning (e.g. “cry, sob, weep” or “fire, blaze, inferno”) and having the students organize the words - such as by intensity or volume.

Spoken language comes before written language, so it is important to try to include activities that encourage students to speak new vocabulary terms. Nelson, Vadasy, and Sanders (2011) suggest using sentence stems, or having a sentence starter and requiring the students finish the sentence on their own. Sentence stems can be altered to include different and more varied vocabulary as the students’ knowledge of the language grows. Additionally, students can be encouraged to use vocabulary words in class. Instead of students saying “I need a pencil” the teacher can encourage the students to say “I require a pencil” and only giving them a pencil once they use the word require.

Stress Free Environment

While Tier 1 words are automatically learned by students whose native language is English, ELLs with visual impairments often do not have the same luxury. When learning content of lessons, these students may be simultaneously learning the background knowledge and necessary Tier 1 vocabulary in the classroom, or required to have additional lessons outside of it. Given that, learning can become stressful to students who are ELLs with visual impairments. Conroy (2005) asserts “Placing a learner in a stressful situation in which language production or performance is demanded impairs the student’s ability to learn or produce spoken language” emphasizing the need to provide ELLs with visual impairments a supportive learning environment where stress is diminished (p. 103). Structuring the learning environment to scaffold the skills of ELLs may encourage participation.

Conclusion

Students who are English Language Learners who also have visual impairments are unique and no single strategy will work for all of them. Subsequently, taking each student’s strengths, needs and learning preferences into account when developing or adapting lessons is essential and requires purposeful advance planning to be sure that both language needs and adaptations for visual supports are attended to. Each professional will bring skills and resources to the table. Collaborating with team members to review the lesson for content and format will assure all stakeholders can work together to increase probability for the best possible outcome for student success.

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Although youth with visual impairments tend to graduate from high school and attend college in numbers comparable to their sighted peers, they are at risk for unemployment as adults. Employment statistics collected during the second National Longitudinal Transition Study indicated that young adults with blindness or low vision were only less likely to be employed than those with cognitive impairment, autism, orthopedic impairments, or multiple disabilities, including deaf-blindness (Newman et al., 2011).

The most current employment data available nationally for adults with visual impairments (21-64 years old) indicate that their employment rate is approximately 42%; however, only 28% are employed full-time and year-round. By comparison, the employment rate nationwide for individuals (21-64 years of age) without disabilities is 78.3% and 58.6% of those are working full-time and year-round. Employment in New England for individuals (21-64 years old) with visual impairments ranges from 37.6% in Maine to 55.9% in Rhode Island; 43.6% in Massachusetts. The employment rates for individuals (21-64 years old) in New England range from 82.5% in Maine to 81.2% in Rhode Island; 81.6% in Massachusetts (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2017).

Research has evidenced several factors that seem to lead to successful employment for youth with visual impairments: Finding jobs independently, the number and length of jobs held while in school, applied

computer skills, social engagement, and disability-specific skills such as orientation and mobility, reading and writing with braille or using optical devices and assistive technology (Capella-McDonnall, 2010, 2011; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011; Wolffe, 2014). However, ensuring that students with visual impairments have opportunities to effectively learn these prerequisite employability skills and secure jobs prior to graduation is challenging. Most of these students are served in mainstream public schools where the staff with whom they work may not feel they have time with the students' busy academic schedules to also teach employability skills or guide them in job seeking. To be ready to exit secondary programs, join the workforce, and integrate into local communities, students with visual impairments may benefit from off-campus or extracurricular instruction in self-awareness, career exploration, job seeking and job maintenance skills to help them secure jobs.

The Perkins School for the Blind is known widely for its stellar on-campus programming for students with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities. In 2015, Perkins Administration with Board support decided to expand the school's short course offerings to meet this transition need of students with visual impairments throughout New England and its CEO established a program planning committee with faculty, staff, and an external consultant. During the last six months of 2015, the committee edited materials from the *Transition Tote System* (Wolffe, 2012) and the RNIB *Pre-Employment Program Trainer's Manual* (Wolffe, 2011), and collected a variety of resources from the Internet. These curricular materials were chosen based on evidence of their effectiveness in similar training situations (Jorgensen-Smith & Lewis, 2004; McMahon, Wolffe, Wolfe, & Booker, 2013; Wittich, Watanabe, Scully, & Bergevin, 2013). With this content, the team designed and wrote up a proposed curriculum and syllabus to launch the Perkins PEP in January 2016.

The pilot was offered at the Grousbeck Center, on the Perkins' campus, as a ten-session classroom program (every other Saturday during the spring semester) with online learning support between sessions via Yammer. It was designed specifically for youth with visual impairments, intending to enter competitive employment settings. The ten PEP sessions included self-awareness and career exploration activities; as well

as, activities that focused on job seeking and job keeping skills. The sessions were presented in the following order:

- Session #1: The Job Readiness Challenge (Self-Awareness)
- Session #2: What Jobs Are Out There (Career Exploration)
- Session #3: Setting Your Goals (Discrepancy Analysis)
- Session #4: Finding Your First Job (Job Exploration)
- Session #5: Building Your Profile (Job Seeking)
- Session #6: Preparing for the Interview (Job Seeking)
- Session #7: Acing the Interview (Job Seeking)
- Session #8: Getting Ready for Work (Job Keeping)
- Session #9: Polishing Your Skills
- Session #10: Finalizing Your Action Plan and Celebrating Your Success

Follow-up activities were determined by consensus and incorporated into participants' Action Plans.

The PEP affords hands-on learning about the world of work and direct instruction in online job searching skills, resume writing, interviewing skills, and the like. There are multiple opportunities during the program to meet adults with visual impairments and discuss their career paths as well as to socialize with peers who have similar visual disabilities. In addition, there is structured time with hiring professionals and disability experts from leading corporations. Finally, the PEP makes use of a social media program, Yammer, and encourages engagement and support in a business-like climate through its use. Yammer, developed by Microsoft, is typically used by companies as a private social media network. The use of Yammer offers students another business tool to add to their “toolbox” of skills. It is highly accessible with screen readers and because it closely resembles Facebook, staff felt the students would take to it like digital natives. The program also allows the facilitators to post discussion topics and/or reminders and engage with the students in their off weeks.

For the Spring 2016 pilot offering, fifteen participants were accepted; however, only thirteen young adults attended consistently. They ranged in age from 14 to 20 years old. A Perkins on-campus TVI and

the Community Programs Assistant Director were the co-facilitators and their efforts were complemented by an AT specialist and a teacher's aide. In addition, a videographer and a photographer attended routinely to document the pilot program for future reference. The participants included eleven mainstream students (two students were attending college and the others were secondary public school students) and two Perkins residential students. Five of the participants were braille readers and eight were print readers (three of the participants were blind). Of the 13 students, nine were on academic tracks and four were learning more functional life skills.

Following their PEP experiences, five participants worked during their summer holiday and two are currently employed while continuing their studies. The two PEP participants who were college students continued in college, two participants graduated from high school and entered college, and nine continued as secondary students (two will graduate this year). When asked what they'd gained from the PEP experiences, participants shared the following comments:

"I gained a lot of confidence in my work ethic and workplace preparedness from attending the PEP program."

"The thing I gained from going was learning that I shouldn't stick to one solo path in life."

"The thing that I learned and took from the PEP program was that you need to put a lot of work into finding a job or finding a great college that will help you to achieve your goals and to be successful in the career you want in life."

"I improved my interviewing skills and got positive feedback."

Their parents shared comments as well:

"I think in many ways it was instrumental in providing her with the confidence she needed to re-apply for the music therapy major and pursue an on-campus job at Berklee, all of which helped her with her self-advocacy."

“She enjoyed it and made new friends.”

“I thought that it helped him become more aware of the business world.”

“He became more of an ‘outgoing’ person.”

Overall it appears that these young adults have gained the following through their PEP engagement:

- Had an opportunity to think about what is possible! Identified their interests, abilities, values, and work personality; then, match those attributes to careers.
- Met and had conversations with employers.
- Established themselves as a cohort, all learning together.
- Experienced a pre-employment program that will help to prepare them for life beyond school, which their sighted peers have not likely had.
- Gained knowledge and skills around job readiness, resumes, soft skills, and employer expectations.
- Designed an Action Plan to tackle what is next for them and defined how what they learned in PEP can assist them in their future experiences!

The pilot effort helped staff recognize that students need more support within the classroom for differentiation of instruction. In the second iteration, they have provided more individual time with students to really get to know them and meet their individual needs, which has worked well. Following the pilot, staff felt they needed a more thorough (and discerning) application process, which they implemented in the second iteration and feel the current class is more homogenous and productive as a result. They also felt that they needed to emphasize quality over quantity regarding content covered. Rather than adhere rigidly to the curriculum in the second session, they now offer more interactive activities to teach the underlying constructs (i.e., increased experiential learning and decreased content learning via lectures). Finally, the staff have noted that parents find the Saturday design challenging and would prefer additional scheduling options.

The second PEP offering, begun in Spring 2017, has nine students (ages 15 to 20 years old)

accepted and eight have attended consistently. Six participants are mainstream students; there are two Perkins residential students and one Perkins day student. Three students are braille readers (two who are blind) and six are print readers. Of the nine, eight are on an academic track and one is learning more functional skills. This year the same co-facilitators are present as well as two Community Programs TVIs, who are learning the PEP content, activities, and are assisting as needed.

What does the future hold? At Perkins School for the Blind, there is a commitment to continued exploration of transition needs in New England communities. Faculty and administration are considering alternative delivery options such as online modules, short courses at other times of the year, remote delivery, and a train-the-trainer option. Design of future offerings will be based on a comparable design model; however, there may be modifications to the curriculum to meet local needs.

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