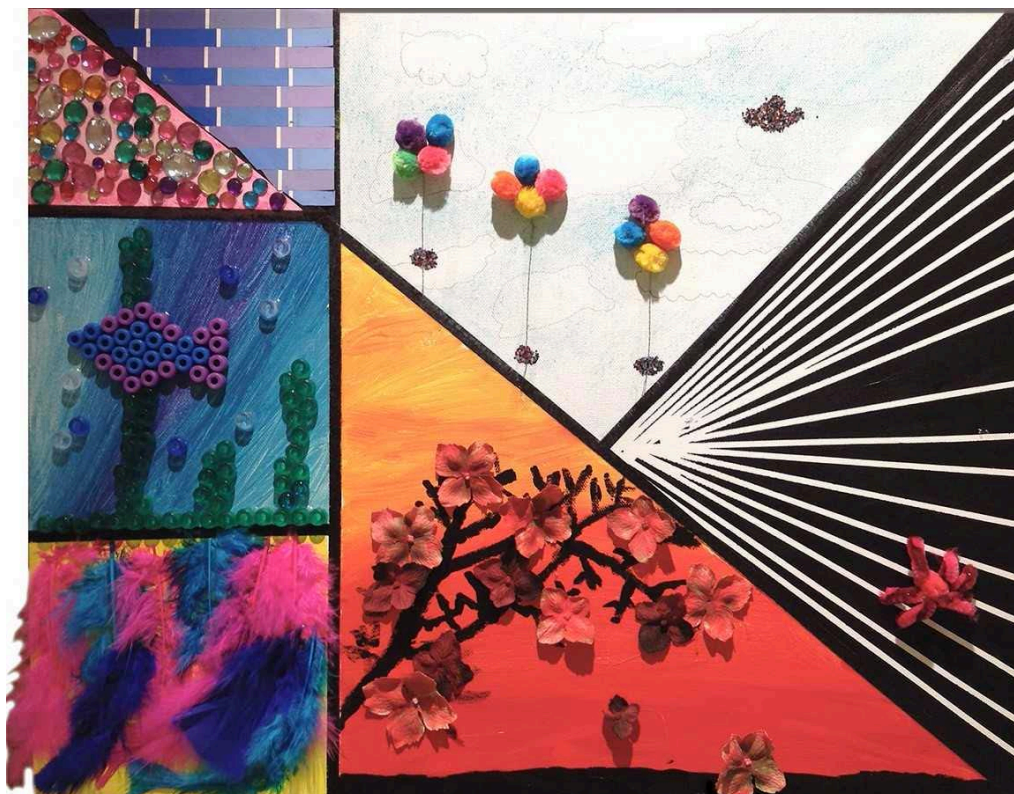


❄ Winter 2018 ❄



TSBVI- Scatterbrained by Lexie Capps

Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Volume 63 Issue 1

The Voice and Vision of Special Education



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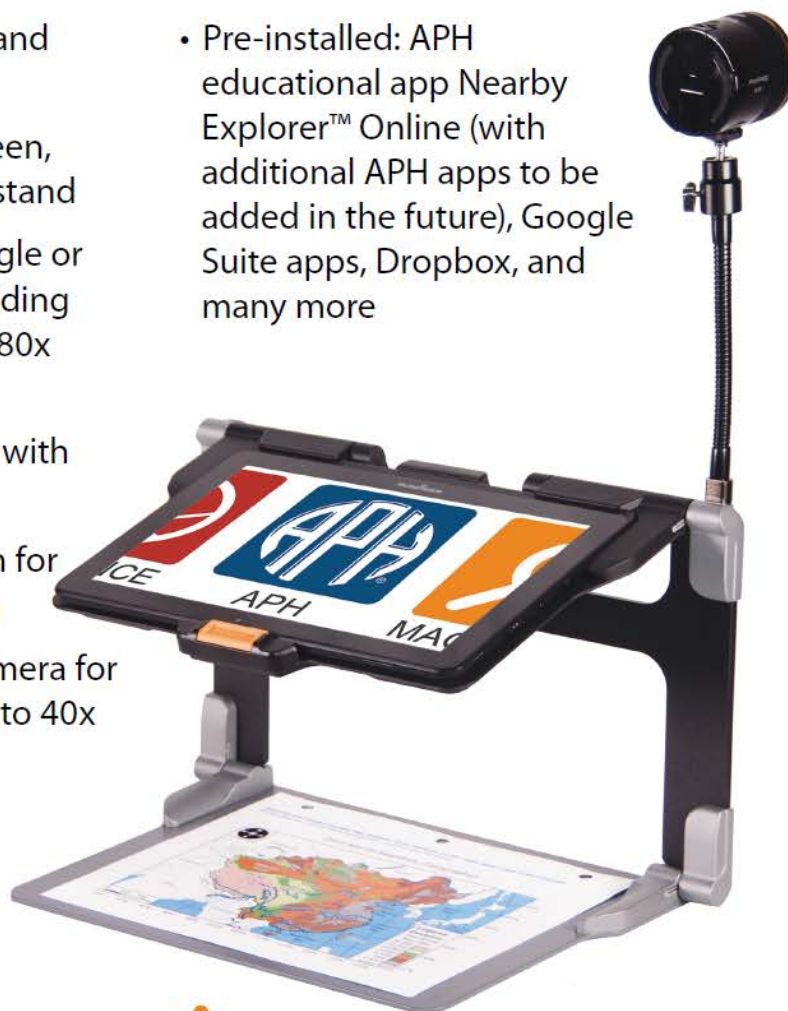
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Message from the Editor



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Happy 2018! Welcome to the Winter Issue of the *Visual Impairments and Deafblind Education Quarterly* journal. This issue is meant to get you excited about the new year and excited to meet with your fellow DVIDB members at this year's annual convention in Tampa, FL! Please make sure to take a look at all of the DVIDB events at convention. This information can be found after the President's Message.

This issue begins with a brief article highlighting Kutztown University's Dine in the Dark annual fundraiser to bring awareness for those with visual impairments. The next article provides useful tips for families and teachers of the visually impaired. Our two focus articles feature information on programs in the great state of Texas. We have our feature article on the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The issue concludes with a focus on the visual impairment program at Stephen F. Austin State University.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Tampa! Safe travels and make sure to enjoy this issue of *VIDBE-Q*.



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President's Message



Amy Parker, Ed.D. & COMS

Assistant Professor

Portland State University

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Dear DVIDB Community,

Welcome to a new year and to newly elected leadership within our compact but vibrant division in the Council for Exceptional Children! As President of DVIDB, I want to congratulate new members of our board and returning members. Nicole Johnson is serving as our President-Elect, Tessa McCarthy is our Secretary, and Lane McKittrick is our Treasurer. Katie Farrand continues to serve as both our representative within the CEC Assembly and our capable editor of *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly*. Newly elected Directors include Karen Vay Walker, Joan Allison, Chris Martin, Angel Perez, and Carol Rimka. Continuing Directors include Adam Graves, Karen Koehler, Kathleen Stanfa. Our student ambassadors are Brittany Larkin and Abby Gifford. I'd like to share special thanks to our Past- President Tiffany Wild for her leadership. Our board members also thank Christine Bischke, Danene Fast, Mackenzie Saviano, and Julie Bardin, who served as Directors for the 2016-2017 term. Our

gratitude extends to Deborah Hatton for her leadership on the DVIDB position papers, as well as serving with Tiffany Wild on the update of the Teacher of the Visually Impaired Standards. Thank you to Sarah Ivy for her work on the membership committee.

As the new president of DVIDB for 2018-2019 term, I look forward to increasing our engagement and opportunities to connect with diverse people, to strengthen our communication, and to lead the validation of our standards for teachers and interveners in the field of deafblindness. To begin, next month we are hosting a program packed with purpose in Tampa, Florida and are trying something new by hosting a pre-convention workshop in partnership with the American Printing House for the Blind, led by the wonderful Millie Smith. By hosting a pre-convention just before the main event, we hope to maximize our members' travel expenses and make a local impact for educators who may not be able to attend the entire convention.



For DVIDB's main convention program, we faced a challenge in having reduced presentation time slots due to smaller spaces in Tampa. Time in our convention schedule become a highly coveted commodity. What do we do when we face constraints on our time? As educators, we innovate! First, we have a few multi-presentation sessions, where two leaders will share time around a connected theme. Secondly, we had several submissions from presenters who were willing to present their work in a poster format at the main convention. Thirdly, we voted as a board to extend some of our invitations to present posters to researchers and practitioners who will attend our pre-convention workshop. Fourthly, we have reduced our board meeting times to host a standards forum to discuss the important processes used within CEC to

validate our knowledge and skills sets, with a focus on teachers of the visually impaired. Sandra Lewis from Florida State University and Tiffany Wild from The Ohio State University will share the committee's work, field questions, and discuss next steps in engaging partners in the field in the validation process as a part of the larger convention program.

Because we aren't only about formal programming, we will be hosting our DVIDB business meeting and social at Jackson's Bistro, a waterside restaurant in Tampa. Thanks to Nicole Johnson and her committee for the planning and sponsorship gathering that was done to make our time together memorable. One of our sponsors, the American Foundation for the Blind, will share policy updates as we enjoy Cogswell-Macy Act themed cakes from a lauded local bakery.

In short, we have a delicious program for you and encourage you to take a break from winter with us in Tampa to learn about apps, innovations in math instruction, self-determination for all students, and student portfolios for enhancing ECC skills. Visit our website for all of the details and for downloadable flyers that describe what we are offering: [DVIDB](#). The DVIDB within the Council for Exceptional Children represents a passionate group of researchers and practitioners from the fields of visual impairments and deafblindness who champion the needs of geographically widespread, low-incidence group of students. We are a part of the larger CEC body because of the work that may be accomplished around the development and sustainability of teacher and paraeducator, including intervener, standards. We both glean and contribute to the efforts of the larger organization. We invite you to share your talents, to get energized

with us, and to co-create change by leading and joining the Division of Visual Impairments and Deafblindness!

<p>All Children Can Read!</p>	<p>Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Website</p> <p>Shift Your Perspective Find Tools and Strategies Use the Literacy Skill Checklist</p> <p>literacy.nationaldb.org</p>
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njohnson@kutztown.edu

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Please contact:

Amy Parker: parkeamy@gmail.com

Nicole Johnson: njohnson@kutztown.edu

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Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness



Special Forum



Friday, February 9, 2018 at 8:00-9:30 AM EST

“Preparation Standards Review: What should we teach our future TVIs?”

by

Tiffany Wild and Deborah Hatton

In this session, presenters will provide an update on the revised initial licensure standards for teachers of students with visual impairments that are currently under review by CEC’s PSP Committee, as well as the process used to assure input from the field. Implications for personnel preparation programs and for professional development will be discussed, and participants will provide input on suggested revisions of standards that emerge from the validation process.

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*FORUM is FREE to all DVIDB Members and just \$15.00 for non-members!

Link to register for convention and seek professional development hours:

<http://www.cecconvention.org>

Dine in the Dark

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Kutztown University

Eating while blindfolded for 45 minutes might not seem all that difficult, but imagine if you could never take that blindfold off. Dine in the Dark in Reading, PA is an event that brings awareness to people who can't ever take that blindfold off, and hopefully it gives the people participating in the event a bit of insight into what dinner is like for those who are blind or visually impaired. If you ask the 150 people who participated in this event, they will most likely tell you this experience was scary and very different. At the end of the event, those who participated informed us about how great of an experience this was and how much they have learned through such a short amount of time. As future teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) this is exciting to hear and we hope to be able to educate our peers more about visual impairments.

Dine in the Dark is an event that TVIs and future TVIs put together along with the Berks County Vision Resource Center. Not only does this dinner raise awareness for people who are visually impaired or blind, but it also raises money for the Berks County Vision Resource Center and the students here at Kutztown University that are enrolled

in the Vision Program. In addition, this event raises money to attend the national council for exceptional children conference.

Kutztown University has one of the largest vision programs in the United States, and we are one of four

undergraduate programs for vision. The students in the vision program begin taking classes such as braille and orientation and mobility during their 3rd semester at Kutztown. If you happen to be at Kutztown University on a Monday night, it is likely that you will see students walking around campus blindfolded and being guided by a classmate. Dine in the Dark specifically helps fund some of the vision students who get accepted to present at conferences at the Council for Exceptional Children's national level.



Students and faculty receiving check for Dine in the Dark.

This year, five students in the vision program have been accepted to present at



Kutztown students pose for a group picture.

the national CEC conference in Tampa, Florida coming up in February 2018. This conference gives the students an opportunity to present their research at a national level as well as receive information from professionals in the field of visual impairments and blindness. This conference is very selective on who they accept to present, so this is an honor at an undergraduate level.

DVIDB ON FACEBOOK

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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 our page by going to the following URL:
<https://www.facebook/pages/Division-on-Visual-Impairments-and-Deafblindness/248244976215>

Envisioning a Bright Path:

Tips for Families and Teachers of the Visually Impaired

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Meet the Author

My name is Beth Ashby Jones and my family has hereditary optic nerve atrophy (father, sister, myself, and my two children). I earned my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in special education from Louisiana State University. I also hold a Master of Education in Educational Psychology, with specializations in special education and school counseling, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (graduated Cum Laude) with a concentration in special education, both from Texas A&M University. I am currently an Associate Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator at Texas A&M University-Commerce. My practical teaching experience included working as a public school teacher for seven years, in a grades 5-6 resource math classroom and then grades K-6 resource reading language arts/math classroom for three years. During five of those years, I served as the lead special education teacher for her respective campuses.

Even given my familiarity with special education, I often find navigating the process for my own children to be intimidating and require advocacy and education on my part. It can be challenging to take on this role and maintain a positive relationship with school personnel. I am hopeful that the tips below will serve to foster a positive school-family relationship.

Introduction

Students with visual impairments (VI) and Deaf-Blindness comprise only .4% and .05% of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), respectively. Furthermore, students in each of these two categories make up less than .05% of the total school age population (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2016). Because of the relative low-incidence of students served with VI or Deaf-Blindness, it is crucial that teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) know how to work with school personnel and families alike to ensure appropriate services. It is also imperative that families learn how to advocate for their child's needs. When preparing professionals and families alike to provide the best possible services for our students with VI we also need to consider the fact that 66.3% of students with VI and 23.2% of students who are Deaf-Blind spend 80% or more of their school day in the general education classroom (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2016). This necessitates the need for TVIs and families to be knowledgeable of the general curriculum and common assessment tools.

Message to Teachers of the Visually Impaired

As a parent of two children with Vis and having gone through the education process from initial evaluation through annual reviews of progress, I have identified many areas in which we can better support our students with VI. Namely, TVIs need to be hands-on, meaning they need to have contact with their families regularly rather than just when it is time for evaluation data or at the child's IEP meeting. TVIs also need to understand that they are the vision expert at the IEP meeting and need to be comfortable serving in a leadership capacity during those meetings. Lastly, TVIs need to make a conscious effort

to ensure they are recommending and implementing evidence-based practices. This is accomplished by consulting the relevant recent published literature (i.e., Have there been empirical studies investigating the effects of an intervention?) and ongoing professional development.

Message to Families of Children with Visual Impairments

Families also need to realize that their child may be the only student with a VI/Deaf-Blind duality that their child's teacher has ever served and help educate them about their child's needs. To do this effectively, it is crucial that families can communicate information about their child's visual condition and learn to 'speak the language' of special education. Families must also not be afraid to question school personnel. However, please note that all communications with school personnel need to be respectful and courteous. Lastly, families can have the greatest impact on instilling confidence in their student and helping him/her learn how to advocate for themselves. Table 1 provides tips, organized by areas of need, for TVIs working with families and school professionals and the corresponding tips for families.

Table 1.

Tips for TVIs and Families of Children with Visual Impairments

Area of Need	Tips for TVIs	Tips for Families
Knowledge of the Special Education Process	Offer parent training sessions regarding the special education process; provide instruction on key terminology and acronyms so families can 'speak the language' of special education.	Refer to reliable websites for information about your rights/your student's rights under the law: http://idea.ed.gov/ www.wrightslaw.com Refer to your state's school for the blind and visually impaired website: http://www.tsbvi.edu/instructional-resources/2785-schools-for-the-blind-in-the-united-states

		Get involved with parent support groups at the national and state level (these links are national, but there are also state chapters): http://www.napvi.org/ http://www.p2pusa.org/
Essential Assessments	Explain the purpose of a functional vision, learning media, and expanded core curriculum assessments.	Learn about the assessments that should be done for a child with a VI: http://www.perkinselearning.org/earn-credits/online-class/essential-assessments
	Consult family during learning media assessment—get family input on the learning media options and their preference.	Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of your child being a print reader versus a Braille reader and decide what is best based on the unique needs of your child. It is possible that he/she may need to learn both, but you need to consider the time out of class in order to do this.
Understanding the Impact of the Vision Loss	Help families try to understand the vision loss and its' impact. If you haven't experienced the VI yourself, it is very hard to understand it.	Ask your child's eye care specialist/TVI to help you understand just what your son/daughter sees and the things he/she may miss in their environment, so you can create purposeful learning activities for them.
	Explain concepts such as 'incidental learning' and how their child's visual acuity relates to 20/20 (i.e. their child with 20/200 vision has to be at 20 feet to see what someone with 20/20 vision sees from 200 feet).	Ask professionals to explain what your child's acuity really means for functional use (i.e. 20/200—what does that mean?). Refer to: http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/key-definitions-of-statistical-terms/25
IEP Meetings	Coordinate simulations for school personnel at the IEP meetings. This should be done at the initial IEP meeting and then annually because school personnel will change annually.	Have your child attending his/her IEP meeting as soon as you feel he/she is ready; Teach them how to talk to adults about their strengths and needs (*i.e. this can be done via a short PowerPoint prepared in advance).

Preparation for a Successful School Year	Have a meeting with the student's educational team at the beginning of each year to explain accommodations and show them how to use the technology.	Organize the most essential information about your child's services on a one-page document and place in a colored folder for distribution, making sure to include all specials teachers (PE, music, art). *Refer to this article for an example : https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ991198 --list accommodations, related services (i.e., OT, PT, etc.), and any other pertinent information (i.e., medical needs) --you can also include concise information about your child's eye condition.
Anticipating needs in advance and planning for them	Help families plan for transition early/anticipate later needs to make appropriate preparations. --i.e. ordering books for courses, planning for needed skills such as keyboarding, anticipating changes in assistive technology needs such as making it more portable.	Seek out agencies and get your child on any waiting lists or services early, even if they end up not needing the services later (i.e. state Commissions for the Blind, Work Force Commission); ask agency personnel to attend your child's IEP meeting to help in the planning process.
Instilling confidence	ALWAYS communicate high expectations to your families/students.	ALWAYS have high expectations for your child and make a point to convey that message frequently. Show your confidence by giving them responsibilities and fostering his/her independence.
Technology	Help families know what technology their student will need at home, to keep it consistent with what he/she is using at school.	Seek out information on assistive technology and how it is incorporated in the IEP: http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/colleges/educationHumanServices/departments/psychologyCounselingSpecialEducation/special-education/at-lab/default.aspx Take advantage of agency services; agencies exist to help you acquire equipment for the home (i.e., Computers for the Blind , Blind Children's Program) https://www.computersfortheblind.net/

Educational Programming	Advocate for your student's least restrictive environment (LRE). This may require you as the vision expert to educate other school personnel.	Learn about LRE requirements/There is a continuum of service options: http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/lre.osers.memo.idea.htm https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.115 If your student is functioning on grade level academically, do not accept less than a placement in general education with vision services from an itinerant.
Co-existing disabilities	Understand that students can be eligible for more than one disability and a VI does not prohibit your child from being identified in another area (i.e., learning disabled).	If you suspect there is more going on than just the visual issues, ask the school for consideration of other disabilities; however, understand how the vision will impact their assessment for other disabilities (i.e., timed IQ tests); make sure the school uses batteries that are valid and reliable for students with VI (normed for that population).
Valid and Reliable Assessments	Help families understand assessments that are being used and those the school might regularly use that may be inappropriate for their student; The absolute last thing we want is for professionals to get an inaccurate picture of the student's intelligence, based on assessments that are not reliable and valid for individuals with VI.	Refer to: http://www.tsbvi.edu/assessment/123-general-2 Don't be afraid to question assessment results: --Ask about the conditions under which the test was administered and, if possible, witness the activities your child is being asked to do (i.e. perform tasks on iStation or MAP testing) --Ask how results are being used to determine IEP goals and how they correlate to your state's adopted essential knowledge and skills for each grade level.

*Note: Available from author upon request.

Conclusion

These tips are intended to empower TVIs and families to take a proactive role in acquiring the needed services for their students. Namely, the suggestions provided are targeted at ensuring students are not underestimated. Other essential areas of focus are the dissemination of information to each new team of providers every school year and

anticipating changing needs as our students grow. Lastly, these tips are aimed at providing consistency between home and school. Consideration of these factors, thus, facilitates the smoothest possible provision of services, specifically during transitions, for students.

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The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

William Daugherty

Superintendent

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

daughertyb@tsbvi.edu

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in Austin, Texas, was founded in 1856, and opened school on its current campus in 1917. The Texas Legislature funded a complete rebuild of the 40-acre campus starting in 2007 and reaching completion in 2015. The facilities include a large conference center that serves as the home base of TSBVI's extensive statewide outreach program. Being centrally located in a vibrant city such as Austin gives the school's students access to many opportunities that promote independent mobility and community integration.

TSBVI's model of service delivery is largely built around three programs: Comprehensive Programs, Short-Term Programs, and Statewide Outreach. The model strives to encourage school districts to access the right program at the right time based upon student needs. Because there are over 10,000 Texas students with visual impairments, the design of the model is intended to spread the school's services out so that most students have an opportunity to access TSBVI's programs in some way every year of their school careers.

Comprehensive Programs is TSBVI's campus-based school program with a residential component. Approximately 160 students are enrolled, and are divided into six learning teams based upon age and instructional needs. Students are served either

in the elementary school, middle school, high school, or the EXIT program focused on transition activities for students who have completed their required academic courses. Additionally, there is a Post-Secondary Program on campus for 18+ students that is operated in conjunction with the neighboring Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center.

Comprehensive Programs is designed to enroll students whose current educational needs are exceeding the level of supports available in their local school districts. When a student is referred to TSBVI for possible placement, a team carefully examines the student's IEP and the services being provided. Not all students are accepted if the referral materials indicate that they are already receiving appropriate educational services and appear to be making adequate progress. For those students who are accepted, a transition plan is begun early on to prepare students and their school districts for transition back to the local districts as soon as both are sufficiently ready. The average length of enrollment is under three years.

Comprehensive Programs serves a broad range of student learning needs from students with multiple disabilities learning in a functional curriculum to students on an academic track in preparation for higher education. The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) focusing on specialized areas of learning specific to students with visual impairments is a major part of each student's program. ECC student learning is highly promoted in the residential program which is supported by four Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVI) who work with both students and residential staff. During both day and evening hours, TSBVI students have access to many recreational, athletic, fine arts and performing arts opportunities both on campus and in the community.

Short-Term Programs (STP) offers year-round programming on the TSBVI campus and on-line for students enrolled in their local schools. The STP has a staff of 13 who exclusively work for the program. During the school year the majority of students in the STP are served in week-long and weekend programs on the TSBVI campus. Enrollment is approximately 220 students. Students are transported to and from the campus at TSBVI's expense either through the school's bus fleet that transports Comprehensive Program students home and back every weekend, or through other means. The STP courses are offered in subject areas where many students appear to need additional help to be successful in their local schools. Often this will involve the use of assistive technology such as the talking graphing calculator, but also includes some classes that are more recreational in nature.

Over the past several years STP has developed the ability to deliver high quality programs on-line. Among the most exciting opportunities in this area are arrangements where the local TSVI learns beside the student in a way that promotes the sustainability of skills taught. It is expected that this will be a major area of growth for the program.

In the summer, STP operates a series of sessions ranging from one week to six weeks on the TSBVI campus. Approximately 320 students are enrolled, all of which attend school in their home districts. These include career development programs, some classes for credit such as Physical Education, and a variety of programs that have themes around which many ECC activities are promoted.

The TSBVI Outreach Program has a staff of over 30 who work exclusively on providing supports to families and schools across Texas. The primary goal of the program is to build local capacity to better serve students in their home communities.

Among the staff are specialists in visual impairments, low vision, deafblindness, multiple disabilities, early intervention, personnel preparation, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, and distance education. The Outreach Program also coordinates TSBVI's partnership with the two university programs (Texas Tech and Stephen F. Austin State Universities) training TSVIs and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) through funding provided to TSBVI as the fiscal agent by the Texas Legislature for stipends and operational costs. This unique arrangement includes a statewide mentor program where new and experienced educators are matched by region, and the Mentor Center where new educators come to the TSBVI campus to observe instructional methods and materials. About 83 new TSVIs and COMS graduate from the two programs each year, and go on to serve in schools statewide.

TSBVI's Outreach Program devotes much of its time to working with families as well as supporting parent groups such as those associated with deafblindness, multiple disabilities, and CHARGE syndrome. Excellent outcomes have been achieved around the state with the Parent Leadership Program designed to train parents to work with other parents and families to become better and more informed advocates and partners with their children's local schools.

Another important statewide role played by TSBVI's Outreach Program is to facilitate the Texas Action Committee (TAC) and the Personnel Preparation Advisory Group (PPAG). The TAC has an official connection to the Texas Education Agency, and brings together educators, parents, rehabilitation agencies, universities, and consumer advocacy groups. The goal of the TAC is to improve services by focusing on areas of high need and developing solutions. The group also develops materials such

as the *Visually Impaired Scale of Service Intensity of Texas* (VISSIT), a tool designed to estimate the amount of services required by individual students based upon their learning needs in the ECC. The PPAG is similarly organized as the TAC and is designed to advise the two university programs on how to best meet the needs of the field.

In addition to the outreach services described above, two other major outreach services provided by TSBVI are the school's website, www.tsbvi.edu, that is among the most visited websites of its type in the world, and TSBVI's extensive publications such as the orientation and mobility book, TAPS. These publications were developed for use by TSBVI and for Texas schools, but are in use nationally and internationally, and are translated with permission into French and Spanish among other languages.

TSBVI recently celebrated its 100th year on our current campus, and strategic planning has the school looking at new ways to reach those needing our services. A video production team and video archivist in Outreach are working on a variety of training products that educators and families can access on-line. Short-Term Programs is similarly looking to increase its on-line capacity and as well as other means to reach more students. Comprehensive Programs has extensive action plans to improve student learning outcomes while continually refining the model of enrolling students for shorter, more focused placements that support more successful transitions back to the home school district.



Sunrise at TSBVI's main building.



TSBVI Classical Guitar Ensemble.



TSBVI theater production of Shrek.

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The Visual Impairment Program at Stephen F. Austin State University

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Stephen F. Austin State University is located in Nacogdoches, the “Oldest Town in Texas,” and is home to a visual Impairment orientation and mobility program, which trains professionals to provide educational and rehabilitative services to individuals who are visually impaired. This program is housed in SFA’s James I. Perkins College of Education in the Department of Human Services.



A student walking on campus.

Brief History

The university's O&M program began in 1972 and was initially funded by the Texas Blindness Agency under a three-year grant designed to train specialists to work with people who are blind. The grant was expected to fulfill the need for O&M specialists across Texas. This underestimation of need has led to continual operation of SFA's program for 46 years and counting.

Later, state legislators and field leaders encouraged the establishment of a program to train teachers of the visually impaired at SFA. A major change occurred with a partnership between SFA, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Texas Tech University that helped establish TVI certification programs at both universities. The entities worked together under the leadership of Drs. Phil Hatlen, Allen Koenig and Dixie Mercer to establish program curriculum and standards. TSBVI and the two universities still collaborate on issues of legislation and advocacy with TSBVI continuing to provide support and leadership through partnerships and the innovative mentor program developed through their outreach department.

SFA's O&M program is nationally accredited by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired University Review Committee. The VI program works with the Texas Education Agency and is accredited through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Our graduates, both TVIs and O&M specialists, are employed across the U.S. and internationally.

Degrees Offered

The VI/O&M program provides training alternatives that lead to certification and/or a Master of Education in special education with specialization in VI or O&M. Each track shares common courses and faculty members. Students who have completed one of the certificate programs are eligible to train toward a master's degree or dual certification.

TVI courses are offered only at the graduate level — either to add TVI certification to an existing teaching certificate or as part of a master's degree in special education with specialization in visual impairment. O&M courses are offered at the undergraduate level in an on-campus program with students earning a Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation with a concentration in O&M.

Graduate-level candidates can receive a *certification only* or work toward a master's degree in special education with specialization in O&M or VI. All certifications are contingent upon successful completion of the necessary examinations through ACVREP for O&M specialists or two TExES exams (Braille and visual impairment) for TVIs.

Undergraduate students in good standing with the university can participate in the O&M program after appropriate advising. Graduate applicants must have at least a bachelor's degree (in any field) from an accredited university. Applicants to the VI program also must have a valid teaching certificate. Teachers from states other than Texas must meet their specific state requirements. Prospective students also must fulfill requirements outlined in the program handbook and Q&A page available at sfasu.edu/humanservices via the links to the VI/O&M program pages.

Unique Features

SFA is one of only two programs in Texas among an estimated 40 such programs in the nation preparing students for certification to work as O&M specialists or TVIs. SFA offers the *only* undergraduate O&M degree in the U.S., and those students can earn ACVREP certification status equal to that of graduate students.

Students are taught by faculty members from both the O&M and TVI disciplines, which provide a broader understanding of the field. Texas residents who complete our program are eligible for TSBVI mentor support for two years.

SFA's TVI track uses online instruction, interactive television and on-site practicum observations. This program has both a fully online option and an option for those in and around Texas to receive braille training through interactive television. Following completion of the braille class, all remaining courses in the TVI certification program (and in both TVI and O&M master's programs) are offered online. Most online classes have synchronous meetings using online-learning platforms, including D2L, Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate to help develop a sense of community and ensure access to instructors.

Those seeking graduate certification or master's degrees in O&M are required to come to SFA to participate in on-campus training for approximately six weeks during the summer. During this time, students live on campus (with expenses typically covered by grant funds) and participate in extensive simulation training in which they wear blindfolds while being taught guide and cane techniques. Students also take part in community-based activities to build instructional skills. The O&M undergraduate program provides the same blindfold training during the 16-week spring semester. Additional training

opportunities are available through our partnerships with the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, area Blind Children's programs, and SFA's Braille and Cane Club, to name a few.

Program Size and Faculty

SFA's program is dedicated to providing high-quality instruction for students with minimal time away from home by using distance education technologies. Instructional arrangements and schedules are designed with the needs of non-traditional students (i.e., working adults) in mind.

Our faculty members are seasoned practitioners in the field of vision who have spent many years serving individuals with visual impairments in a variety of settings and who share a deep commitment to training high-quality professionals. The program maintains low student/teacher ratios and offers training in a cohort model and through open enrollment. Faculty members work closely together and are dedicated to maintaining family-like support for students.

We believe it is essential for our students to be dedicated, creative and persistent as they serve children and adults with visual impairments. We seek to train quality practitioners with pragmatic skills and to prepare professionals to become future leaders in the field and provide the highest quality service to individuals with visual impairments.

Financial Aid and Grants

The VI and O&M program is supported by federal and state grants to help provide funding to students. The State of Texas Grant is provided through TSBVI and provides support to Texas residents pursuing training as TVI or certified O&M specialists. The federal grant is provided through the Rehabilitation Services

Administration of the U.S. Department of Education and is open to graduate students across the U.S.

With these funds, we are able to offer full stipends to students entering the program with support awarded on a competitive basis. Stipends cover tuition and fees to the university throughout certification. If a student wishes to earn a master's degree, he or she must self-pay or seek other financial aid for the additional courses required. Further information on these financial agreements can be found online in the program handbook.



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