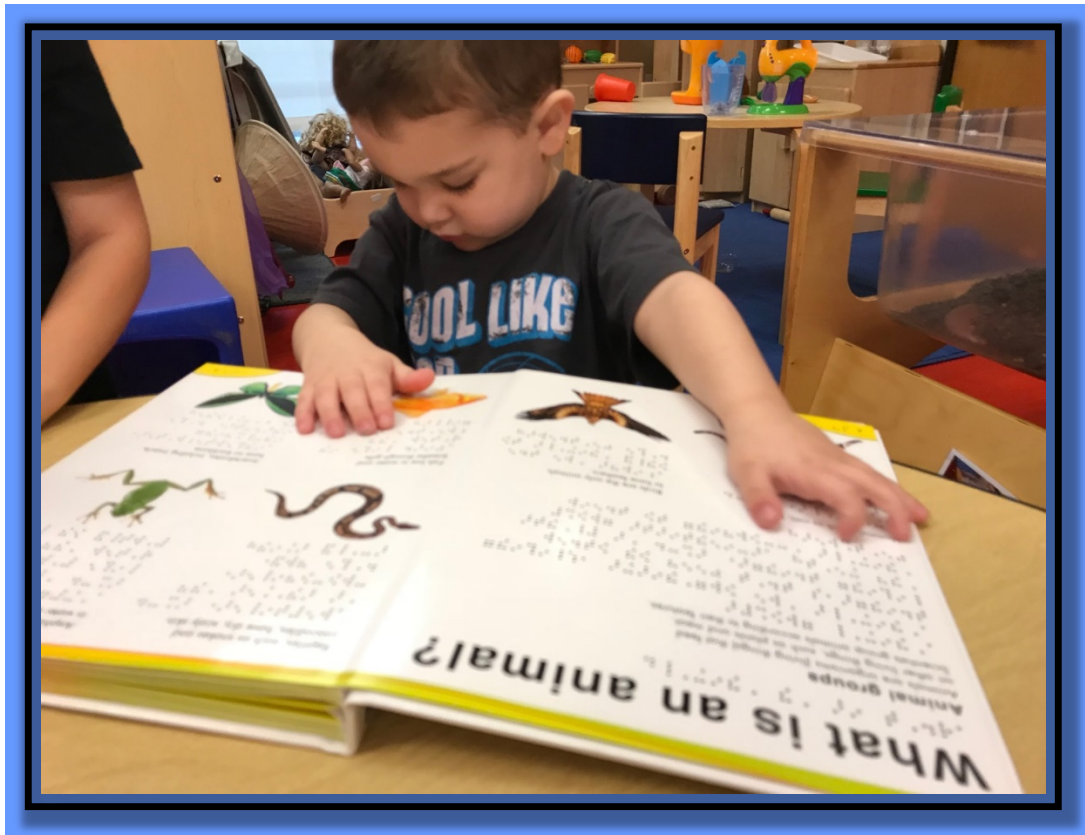


Winter 2019



Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Volume 64, Issue 1

The Voice and Vision of Special Education



Cover photo description: Bradley shows us it is never too early to expose our students to braille books! A young boy is exploring a braille book about animals. Cover photo provided by Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS).

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Message from the Editor

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Happy New Year! I am pleased to share the first issue of the *Visual Impairments and Deafblind Education Quarterly* (VIDBE-Q) journal with you. This issue is a collection of articles to preview the upcoming CEC convention, remember important members of the field that we lost in 2018, and read about programs and experiences in the field of visual impairments and deafblindness.

This issue begins with articles featuring the DVIDB preconference presenters. The presenters describe their work and preview some of the great information you will have the opportunity to learn more about when you attend the Special pre-convention workshops on January 29, 2019 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Then, we remember Dr. Jan van Dijk and Dr. Deborah Hatton and the legacy that they believe behind.

The issue ends with two regional feature articles on programs in the Midwest to highlight the great work happening near this year's annual convention and expo. The first program highlights the work of the Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) and the Early Childhood Education and Visual Impairment Education Program at The Ohio State University. The issue closes with an article from a DVIDB board member about her experience at the CEC's Leadership Institute.

Please take a moment to read, remember, and reflect on 2018. I look forward to staring 2019 with this year's upcoming convention. I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming Pre-convention and Convention in Indianapolis, IN. If you are presenting, please make sure to submit an article about your presentation for the Spring 2019 Convention Issue of the *VIDBE-Q*. Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2019!

President's Message

Amy Parker, EdD & COMS

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Welcome to 2019! Our time in Indianapolis is right around the corner. As we reflect on the past year, our DVIDB community of leaders has experienced some personal and professional losses. Our own dear Dr. Deborah Hatton, a leader in early intervention and research with infants and toddlers with visual impairments, Dr. Jan van Dijk, the renowned international educator for students who are deafblind, and Dr. Sonny Summers, a gifted teacher-leader are remembered as contributors and

influencers in the fields of visual impairment and deafblindness. In Indianapolis at our international convention, we will be celebrating not only their professional contributions, but will be learning from new and seasoned leaders in our field, who continue their important efforts.

This year we will award our dissertation of the year to a scholar in Dr. Hatton's name. At our pre-convention workshop, Dr. Cathy Nelson, a close colleague of Dr. van Dijk, will present their shared book from APH on Child-Guided-Assessment as well as demonstrating a dance based intervention for students with emerging communication. We will honor the work of Dr. Summers by awarding a scholarship in her name to an aspiring TSVI. We invite you to be a part of these celebrations and learning opportunities.

For more information about our preconvention, our DVIDB sessions, our community forum, our award winners, and our social, please visit our [DVIDB website](#) to find flyers, schedules, and more details. It's not too late to register for the CEC convention, visit the main [CEC Convention page](#).

Cheers for a happy and healthy Winter season and we look forward to growing and learning with you throughout 2019.

2019 SPRING CONVENTION ISSUE

Submit your manuscript on your
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Editor: Dr. Kathleen M. Farrand,
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CEC's DVIDB Preconvention Workshop: Teaching Concepts to Children with Visual Impairments and Deafblindness Using the BEST Elements of Dance

**Kristen Paul, Clinical Professor, M.Ed., & Brooke Barnhill, Student
University of Utah**

Creative dance is a proven strategy for promoting positive learning outcomes for students with disabilities (Nelson, Paul, Johnston, & Kidder, 2017). Increasingly, studies investigating the effect of using creative dance as a context for learning show improvements in academic, adaptive, communication, and social skills. (Nelson, Paul, Barnhill, 2017). However, to date, few studies have investigated the impact of arts instruction, including dance, on students with sensory impairments, which may be explained by the fact that few arts programs, including those in educational settings, offer instruction explicitly designed for students with visual impairments and/or deafblindness (Nelson, Paul, & Barnhill, 2017). That said, to increase access and enhance learning outcomes, it is vital that educators learn strategies to integrate creative dance into lessons, activities, and routines. The purpose of this article is to highlight the upcoming Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) Preconvention workshop, in which participants will learn to use creative dance including the BEST

elements of dance as a framework to teach concepts to students with vision impairments and deafblindness.

To begin, what is creative dance? Whereas professional dancers perform choreographed steps to entertain audiences; creative dancers use movement as a means to communicate their individual experience of the world (Nelson et al., 2017). Further, creative dance is movement exploration in which the dancer interacts and learns about the environment in a tactile and kinesthetic manner (Nelson et al., 2017). Across art forms, artists learn techniques to enhance their performance. Teachers and students of creative dance use the elements of dance known as Body, Energy, Space, and Time (BEST) as a guide to creating authentic movements for the means of self-expression and communication (Nelson et al., 2017). These elements can also be used to enhance lessons, increase participation and teach concepts to children who are visually impaired or deafblind. For example, to learn about different energy qualities, a dance teacher models movements associated with sneaky cats and playful puppies, and then prompts the students to explore new ways to move like the animals. Creative dance is an alternative hands-on approach to learning, which may benefit the unique learning needs of students with visual impairment and deafblindness (Nelson et al., 2017).

Table 2. The BEST Model as a Framework for Special Education Instruction.

BEST	Elements	SPED Instructional Strategies
Body	body parts body systems inner self	awareness of self and others, body abilities balance senses, emotions, intention, self-regulation
Energy	flow quality	bound versus free, adult-led versus child-led, turn-taking active versus passive, alertness level, mirroring emotions motivation relationships: awareness of others, trust
Space	place focus	moving – still, direction, size inward, outward accommodations orientation and mobility environmental design
Time	rhythm timing duration speed	calendar system, anticipation, patterns/repetition before – after duration of instruction pace of instruction/activity, wait time,

Note. Reprinted from “Creative dance-based communication intervention for children with multiple disabilities including sensory impairment.” by Nelson, Paul, & Barnhill (2017). *Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication* Sig 12, 2(3), 70-80. Copyright 2016 by "American Speech-Language-Hearing Association."

Sensory loss impacts an individual's ability to develop foundational skills for learning; namely joint attention, reciprocity, and mutual orientation, which in turn affects communication and concept development (Nelson et al., 2017). Students who are deafblind require innovative approaches to learning, including the use of preferences and tactile and vestibular exploration of the environment (Nelson et al., 2017). Creative dance can be a useful approach to teach students with sensory loss, as it is inherently non-verbal, kinesthetic and tactile, and lessons can be developed based on student's interests and learning needs. Also, with its focus on the exploration of concepts through movement, the BEST elements of dance

can be a helpful framework for educators to teach concepts to students with vision loss and deafblindness (Nelson et al., 2017). Participants attending the CEC DVIDBI Preconvention workshop will learn strategies for using the BEST elements of dance across classroom activities and routines to teach concepts.

Individuals with sensory loss may have limited access to their environment including instruction. They may need additional and specific accommodations to be fully included in movement activities. Nelson, Paul, & Barnhill (2017), provided the following considerations to include students with visual impairments and deafblindness in creative dance:

- Consult with the students' parents and educational team to learn the child's sensory abilities, additional disabilities, communication system, and likes and dislikes. Consult with the Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired (TBVI) and Orientation and Mobility Instructor (O&M) to learn the students' visual impairments, accommodations and ability to navigate space.
- Set up a safe environment and keep it consistent. Orient the students to the space and tell and show them if there are any changes. Consistent routines build anticipation and confidence (Gilbert, 2015).
- Use auditory and tactile instruction. When teaching movements, use clear and specific instructions. The use of peers or aides to act as tactile models can demonstrate movements to students with vision impairments.
- Students may feel more comfortable first learning movements when they are grounded (sitting or lying on the floor) in their personal space before they are asked to travel across the space (Green Gilbert, 2015). You can also use tactile props to mark routes.
- Use concrete examples that students have had experience with to describe shapes and dance movements. Build on what the child knows and add additional elements after giving them concrete examples and multiple opportunities to learn.

- Provide multiple ways to access and participate in the activity. Children with severe and multiple disabilities may show their engagement through very small movements or behaviors. Honor the uniqueness of each child's dance (p. 73-74).

Conclusion

With accommodations, creative dance can be a successful context for teaching concepts to children with visual impairments and deafblindness. At the Preconference CEC DVIDB workshop participants will learn strategies for using the BEST elements of dance to teach academic, adaptive, and social skills. Workshop participants will learn and explore the BEST elements of dance through interactive movement activities facilitated by the presenters. Case studies with video examples and lesson plans will be used to demonstrate ways to use creative dance to teach concepts to students with visual impairments and deafblindness. The presenters will discuss specific accommodations to ensure students with visual impairments and deafblindness are fully included in dance activities. Finally, the presenters will help participants use the BEST elements of dance to develop lesson plans for using creative dance to teach skills in their classrooms. The presenters intend that participants will leave the workshop with the necessary knowledge and skills to use creative dance as a strategy for teaching concepts to students with vision loss and deafblindness.

Child-guided Strategies: The van Dijk Approach to Assessment

Catherine Nelson

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Mason is five years old with curly brown hair and an infectious smile. He laughs easily and hugs his family and teachers. He also has a severe bilateral hearing loss, cerebral palsy, and near total blindness. Today, his parents learned that he is below the first percentile on the norm-referenced test that was administered to test his abilities. Mason seemed happy when he went into the testing room with the psychologist but things quickly went downhill when he realized his mother was not in the room. The psychologist tried to comfort him by stroking his hair, but startled, Mason reached up and pinched her arm. As the assessment began, Mason was handed blocks to stack and he put them in his mouth. When the blocks were pulled away, Mason screamed. He was handed a miniature chair which he again put in his mouth. This time, when the assessor tried to pull it away, he threw it down and broke a leg off the chair. After 15 long minutes of being bombarded with directions, objects, and tasks that had no

meaning for him, Mason began to scream and cry and the session was abruptly terminated. His parents and teacher left the session defeated by the results that seemed to suggest that Mason incapable learning.

In the 1960's, Dr. Jan van Dijk of the Netherlands was charged with testing students who were deafblind due to congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) and he found much frustration in attempting to test the students via existing instruments. Over time, he discovered that if he observed the students carefully and joined with them in their chosen activities, he was able to learn much more about the students including how they learn and can therefore, best be taught. By following their lead, Dr. van Dijk was able to avoid the unhappy situation experienced by Mason. Using different models for explaining behavior and learning including neurobiological, social learning, transactional, and attachment models, he began developing what became known as the van Dijk Child-guided Approach to Assessment (Nelson, van Dijk, McDonnell & Thompson, 2002; Nelson, van Dijk, Oster, & McDonnell, 2009).

Because of limitations imposed by the lack of vision, hearing, as well as frequent motor disabilities, students who are deafblind often have limited opportunities to learn from incidental or chance learning through observation and exploration. Consequently, it is difficult to predict ability to

learn based on past knowledge. What is important to future learning is the discovery of neurological and social processes children use as they learn and experience their world. Such processes include the (a) ability to maintain and modulate state, (b) preferred learning channels, (c) ability to learn, remember, and anticipate routines, (d) ability to accommodate new experiences with existing schemes, (e) approach taken to solve problems, (f) ability to form social attachments and interact with others, and finally (g) communication modes (Nelson, et al., 2002; Nelson, et al., 2009). Once gained, this information can be used to develop individualized education that builds on child strengths rather than weaknesses.

In order to obtain information about how students with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities including deafblindness learn, it is important that students feel comfortable and secure within the assessment environment and thus, the foundation of the Child-guided Assessment is the establishment of relationships with children being assessed. The children are not stressed by having those with whom they feel most secure leave before a new relationship is formed (Nelson, et al., 2009). Further, the children are allowed to explore the environment and assessment materials are selected based on the children's interests. Often, children with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities are not fully engaged or

interested in the world around them, and Dr. Dijk found that in order to help them demonstrate their learning and skills, he needed to go “inside” their world and understand their values and meanings (MacFarland, 1995).

Therefore, in the child-guided framework, the assessor must ensure that his/her emotions and communications are attuned with the assessed child.

Throughout the assessment, the assessor follows the child’s interests and movements as interactive, communicative routines are built. In order to accomplish this, the assessor begins the assessment by observing the child and then imitating and following what the child does. When a turn-taking routine is established, new information is incrementally added.

Communicative signals are elicited by stopping the routine and asking the child to communicate whether it should continue, stop, or move to something new. Throughout, each of the child’s movements and behaviors are responded to as communication. After several such routines are established, the assessor asks the child to follow his/her lead as imitation and more complex routines are both assessed and scaffolded. Learning experiences are built that allow the child to demonstrate existing skills, ability to adapt to and accommodate new information, and ability to learn new skills (Nelson, et al., 2009).

The framework of the assessment was formalized and detailed in a CD ROM (van Dijk & Nelson, 2001) and a journal article (Nelson, et al., 2002). In 2009, it was published by the American Printing House for the Blind in a user- friendly manual format. However, because the assessment process is a holistic model and is guided by child interests, there are no standard materials or instructions. In an attempt to discover if practitioners could implement the assessment with fidelity to the assessment methods, and come to reliable or consistent conclusions, a study was conducted in 2010 by Nelson, Janssen, Oster, & Jayaraman. The study concluded that after a half day training, practitioners, on average, were able to implement the assessment with fidelity and reach similar conclusions in all assessment areas.

At the 2019 conference of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Dr. Catherine Nelson, Associate Professor at the University of Utah and long-time collaborator of Dr. Jan van Dijk, will present a training on the assessment in a preservice workshop sponsored by the American Printing House for the Blind and the Division of Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB). The workshop will be held on the morning of January 29, 2019.

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Dr. Jan van Dijk

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On January 23, 2018, we lost a luminary in the field of deafblindness with the passing of Dr. Jan van Dijk of the Netherlands. Often known as the “father of deafblind education,” Dr. van Dijk began his career as an educator working with children who are deafblind in the late 1950’s and obtained training in deafblindness at Perkins School for the Blind in the early 1960’s. In 1962, he started the first school for children with deafblindness, the St. Rafael School in Sint Michielsgestel, the Netherlands (now Kentalis Rafael). His groundbreaking work with students with congenital rubella syndrome received world-wide attention as educators grappled with how to teach students with the syndrome after the world-wide rubella outbreak in the 1960’s. As a result of his work on assessment, communication development, and challenging behaviors of students who are deafblind, Dr. van Dijk received the Anne Sullivan Award and Deafblind

International's Distinguished Service Award. In addition, his work has been widely published in numerous languages.

Dr. van Dijk inspired audiences throughout the world as he traveled and assessed children until the last year of his life. His impact on children who are deafblind and teachers throughout the United States was enormous. Educators and parents attending his workshops and assessments were unfailingly awed as he connected with all of the children and youth by observing and following their movements and interests. No matter their disability level, he was able to find the spark that could trigger further learning.

Jan van Dijk understood that all children, regardless of label or disability, are first and foremost children, and children like to laugh and play. Following their playful interests, he went under tables, stood on chairs, and put his tie on his head. Immersed in child interests, dignity was never important to him. He always cared most about connection with the students and finding their moments of joy. Building on child strengths, he gave parents and teachers what they needed most, hope, concrete strategies, and inspiration.

Throughout his career, Dr. Jan Dijk sought new research and added the new learning to his teaching and assessment methods. Through his

numerous publications and presentations, he was passionate about giving educators the tools needed to implement his methods and it was his sincere hope that his work be carried on by practitioners and parents around the world.



In Memoriam
Dr. Jan van Dijk



In Memoriam
Dr. Deborah Hatton

1952-2018



Dr. Deborah Hatton: In Memory of a Mentor, Colleague, and Friend

Carlie Rhoads

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Deborah Hatton changed my life with just one phone call. I had cultivated a relationship with her when I was earning my master's degree at Vanderbilt University and working for the visual disabilities department; we kept in touch after I graduated and I was working as a special educator. I was unhappy with my current job and not sure what to do next when Deborah asked me a question that would forever change everything for me,



Image 1. Deborah Hatton

“why don’t you come and work with me?” Nothing would be the same for me after that!

I spent the next four years working closely with Deborah, oftentimes sequestered in her office alongside her for hours. I entered with a basic knowledge about sensory impairments and under her tutelage, I learned almost everything that

I currently know from visual impairments to research. We worked long

hours and Deborah had very high expectations, but she also cared very deeply about me as a person and we developed a close friendship. I know that I am not the only student that she affected so deeply. Deborah's former doctoral students, Sarah Ivy and Mackenzie Savaiano, are now successful professionals in the field and have expressed their deep gratitude for Deborah below.

"Deborah left an indelible mark on me both personally and professionally. My work is in large part a product of her advisement and mentorship, and specifically her conviction that experimental intervention research was most needed at this time, given the emphasis on evidence-based practices in policy. Personally, I admired Deborah most for her faith, humility, honesty, and generosity. She was a woman not afraid to admit her shortcomings, and always strove to do what she felt was right and honorable. She was whip smart too. I am so grateful to have known her; words are insufficient to convey it." Sarah Ivy, Florida State University

"The first research project I ever worked on was a competency for my doctoral program. I administered a repeated reading intervention to students with low vision and when I submitted a poster proposal to CEC 2012, it was accepted. This was my first CEC acceptance and I was ecstatic, but CEC was in April and I was due with my first child. Rather than

cancel, Deborah took my poster to Denver and stood by it for me on April 12 and Remy was born 3 days later. She didn't have to do that, but she knew it was a milestone and I don't even know if I thanked her properly."

Mackenzie Savaiano, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

One of the most amazing qualities that Deborah possessed, if I had to pick one, was her ability to give. She firmly believed in living a life of service, in aiding those in need, and she embodied this quality in her daily activities. She never sought recognition and often worked countless hours on projects that



Image 2. Headshot of Deborah Hatton

she wouldn't receive recognition or credit for, but if something would better the field and help students with visual impairments, Deborah was right there, front and center. The last project she worked on was spearheading the efforts to rewrite the professional standards for the Division of Visual Impairments and Deaf-blindness (DVIDB) within the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC); these standards, which were just recently officially approved after three long years of work, will guide and inform how we teach future teachers of students with visual impairments. Deborah took the lead of this project. She was never afraid of hard work or taking a leadership role, and worked tirelessly. We worked alongside Stacy Kelly,

Holly Lawson, Sandra Lewis, and Tiffany Wild for three years to create what I can safely say are some of the highest quality standards for our field and will inform our practice for years to come. The members of our standards committee have offered the following words in remembrance of Deborah.

“I have had the honor of working on several projects led by Deborah. The CEC DVIDB professional standards project was the last project I had the privilege of working on with Deborah. She always believed we could accomplish whatever it was that we were working on with the highest level of quality to have the greatest possible impact on the lives of children who are blind or have low vision. Her righteous and convincing demeanor was inspirational and rubbed off on all of us. Deborah truly led by example. There are so many of us that were personally touched by Deborah and her work. We all miss her so much.” Stacy Kelly, Northern Illinois University

“My favorite times with Deborah were when we attended meetings together. Whether the meeting was at OSEP, CEC, or a committee meeting that we served together, I would watch and listen to her. I learned so much from her about how to be a leader. Many times I called on her for advice, and she always picked up the phone and provided me with her opinions. I am forever grateful for her time, talent, and expertise that she shared with

the field. She was a true mentor, leader, colleague and friend. I miss her dearly!” Tiffany Wild, The Ohio State University



Image 3. Another headshot of Deborah Hatton

“Before I ever met Dr. Deborah Hatton, I benefitted from her work. In fact, I'd say most teacher candidates in the United States did. She led a training and dissemination grant, Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments Impairment, aimed at providing personnel preparation programs with resources and materials with a

focus on early intervention for youth with visual impairments. While enrolled at the University of Arizona, I completed in a course that leveraged the use of these rich and accessible modules. Once I started my doctoral studies, I was fortunate to receive an entire set of the materials. Today, these are still sought out and widely used tools for personnel training programs.” Holly Lawson, Portland State University

“Unlike anyone I’ve ever met, Deborah assumed that people could do far more than they themselves believed. She established genuine personal relationships with professional colleagues that made it very difficult to disappoint her when working together on a project. She tackled joint projects with hard work and commitment, but also through the quiet

expectation of others whom she treated as equal collaborators, even when in truth she was far better at what was being done. I still find it very difficult to put into words how much Deborah's belief in me meant to me." Sandra Lewis, Florida State University

Deborah left her mark on every single person that she interacted with; on her students, on her colleagues, on the children she worked with in the field, and in almost every aspect of the world of visual impairments, from standards to research and beyond. Personally, I know that I would have never discovered a passion for the field without her and without her guidance, I would not be prepared to enter the field and be the best researcher, educator, and professional possible. I think Mackenzie Savaiano put it best with the following quote; "Whenever I find myself overwhelmed, I hear Deborah's voice saying, "I'm in survival mode" and I almost immediately have a better sense of what I need to do." I still hear Deborah's voice in my head every day, guiding me and helping me make the best decisions possible. She will forever be remembered for being a one-woman force of nature who was unstoppable whenever she decided to do something. Deborah Hatton was one of the most amazing people that I have ever been privileged to meet. Deborah, our hearts and prayers are with you as you will always be with us.



**Council for Exceptional Children Conference
Indianapolis, IN**

January 29 – February 2, 2019

**DVIDB Business Meeting and Social
Thursday, January 31st**

**The Rathskeller
6:30 to 9:30 PM**

We are excited to let you know about a special opportunity to sponsor the DVIDB social event on Thursday, January 31st, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. This annual event, immediately following the brief DVIDB business meeting, is a time to gather, mingle and celebrate with professionals in the fields of visual impairment and deafblindness from across the nation. This year, we will be honoring the work of [Dr. Deborah Hatton](#) who's leadership in the field of visual impairments and within DVIDB will be greatly missed.

Sponsors are encouraged to share information about their projects, advertise their programs or products, and connect with attendees in a relaxed and more intimate atmosphere.

New teachers and seasoned colleagues, alike, tell us that the DVIDB social is one place during the vast CEC convention where they engage with others in the field, despite our varied interests and responsibilities!

This year we are hosting the business meeting and social near the Indianapolis Convention Center at the Rathskeller, a quaint Bavarian themed restaurant in the historic 19th century Athenaeum building in downtown Indy.

We gather at 6:30 for the business meeting and begin the social immediately after until 9:30 p.m to share information, support DVIDB, and relax with colleagues!

Please consider supporting DVIDB's social and business meeting. See below for sponsorship levels and opportunities.

To become a sponsor, contact Amy Parker at atp5@pdx.edu or Nicole Johnson at njohnson@kutztown.edu for more information.

DVIDB Sponsorship Levels CEC Convention 2019, Indianapolis

\$ 250.00 sponsorship level – You will receive **1 Free Ticket** to the DVIDB pre-conference workshop and a **name plate** for your organization, engraved by students at The Ohio State School for the Blind.

\$ 500.00 sponsorship level – You will receive **2 Free Tickets** to the DVIDB pre-conference workshop, a **name plate** for your organization, engraved by students at The Ohio State School for the Blind, and a **display table** at the Teacher and Intervener forum.

\$ 1000.00 sponsorship level – You will receive **4 Free Tickets** to the DVIDB pre-conference workshop, a **name plate** for your organization, engraved by students at The Ohio State School for the Blind, a **display table** at the Teacher and Intervener forum, and **10 minutes speaking time** at the forum to share your work with others.

One additional opportunity for sponsorship is to sponsor one of our speakers at the pre-conference. By sponsoring one of our speakers you are entitled to everything at the \$1000.00 sponsorship level.

All sponsors will receive social media advertising through our Facebook and Twitter feeds. They will also receive recognition at all of our events, as well as, in our Quarterly publication, VIDBE-Q.

Sponsorship is easy!

1. Simply email Amy Parker atp5@pdx.edu or Nicole Johnson at njohnson@kutztown.edu and let them know your level of sponsorship.
2. Our treasurer, Lanya McKittrick (lanyamck@gmail.com) will email you an invoice based upon your level of sponsorship. The invoice will state the details related to the agreed sponsorship.
3. We will work with your representative, who is attending the conference, to arrange the display information at the forum (for those at the \$500 and \$1000 level).

Visually Impaired Preschool Services: 35 Years and Growing

Kathryn Mullen, Director of Education

Diane Nelson, Executive Director

Visually Impaired Preschool Services,

kmullen@vips.org

Our Mission:

Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) empowers families by providing educational excellence to young children with visual impairments in order to build a strong foundation for reaching their highest potential.

Before 1985, young children who were blind or visually impaired living in Kentucky and Indiana had no access to early intervention services for their vision-specific needs. That all changed when a group of concerned citizens, led by an employee of the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) Research Department, joined together to begin offering the same early childhood services identified during visits to APH field work sites across the country.

With \$20,000 in startup grants from Louisville's Metro United Way and the WHAS Crusade for Children, a local philanthropic organization

providing educational and medical services for children with special needs,



Image 1. Aubrey loves to explore the braille riddles on the playground at Kids Town Preschool at VIPS.

Visually Impaired Preschool Services, better known as VIPS, was born!

Researchers and therapists who work with children who are visually impaired have demonstrated there is a direct correlation between early intervention and future academic success. It was this bit of

knowledge that formed the charge of VIPS: To enhance learning opportunities by providing early intervention services to young children with blindness or low vision and their families in the Louisville (Kentucky) area. VIPS started modestly with one person, Sharon Bensinger, the original employee from APH, providing eight families with home-based early intervention services. Bensinger served as the founding Executive Director of VIPS for 25 years.

Since that time, VIPS has grown into an impactful agency, serving over 600 families across two states during the last fiscal year. Today, VIPS

supports three office locations in Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky and Indianapolis, Indiana.

As an infant organization, VIPS shared space with other non-profits with the shared mission of serving young children. As awareness of VIPS grew, so did the demand for services. VIPS moved into its current location in



Image 2. Camilo receives a little help from his friend, Anthony, to move about the Kids Town Preschool at VIPS playground.

December of 2004 with space for office and support services as well as a classroom wing for center-based preschool services. In the summer of 2008, with the generous support of Kosair Charities and the Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, Kids Town Preschool was completed. Young children who were blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind from across the region were now able to come to VIPS for preschool. Today, Kids Town Preschool at VIPS is Kentucky's only full-time preschool for children with visual impairments. It is nationally accredited through AdvanceED and is Jefferson County, Kentucky's first five-star rated preschool/childcare facility.

The VIPS Central Kentucky office opened in Lexington in October 1990. In 2015 VIPS entered into a partnership and relocated the VIPS Central Kentucky office at the Lexington Hearing & Speech Center. Little Learners, a playgroup for two-year-olds who are blind or visually impaired,



Image 3. Judah LOVES Kids Town Preschool at VIPS!

opened its doors to the Lexington community. Likewise, Lexington Hearing & Speech Center began welcoming VIPS children into their inclusive preschool program, originally established to serve children with language delays and/or hearing loss.

Because the VIPS mission knows no borders, in 2011 a satellite location with two employees was launched in Bloomington, Indiana. Driven by a mother of a blind child and a dedicated Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision, VIPS Indiana was a grassroots effort charged to change the landscape for Indiana's youngest children who are blind or visually impaired. With the backing of the VIPS Board of Directors, this mother and teacher began providing early intervention services in 2011.

VIPS moved the Bloomington office to Indianapolis in May 2014 to expand its reach from a more centrally-located address. VIPS Indiana started with eight children in 2011; during the last fiscal year, over 200 young children received VIPS Indiana services. Eager to establish roots in a space of their own, VIPS Indiana is excited to announce a new partnership with TWG Development to build a VIPS Family Resource Center in Indianapolis with an estimated completion date of June 2020.

VIPS services and programming are provided by highly qualified teachers, many of whom are dually certified as Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Educators, as well as



Image 4. Visually Impaired Preschool Services Building.

Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists. These services include:

Birth through age 2 – Early intervention services are provided through Kentucky and Indiana First Steps systems. Children and families are served in their home, childcare center, preschool, and/or community.

Parent Empowerment Program – VIPS parents are invited to VIPS for an opportunity to network and troubleshoot strategies for raising a young child

who is visually impaired. There is typically an educational component for parents and caregivers with VIPS staff and volunteers providing childcare support as needed.

2 Day Two's/First Steps Playgroup and Little Learners – Upon their second birthday, VIPS children are invited to join the two-day preschool program and/or First Steps Playgroup at Kids Town Preschool on the VIPS Louisville campus or the Little Learners playgroup on the VIPS Central Kentucky campus. Two-year-olds are also served in their community and homes through First Steps.

3-5-year-olds – VIPS children are served in our preschool program at Kids Town Preschool on the VIPS Louisville campus. VIPS also provides consultation and direct services in preschool classrooms of public school systems and private schools.

Sighted Peer Program – VIPS has long recognized, and is supported through research, that children learn best in the company of same-age peers who are developing typically. Kids Town Preschool reserves slots for the inclusion of sighted peers. Sighted peers are welcomed in the Little Learners playgroups as well.

Orientation and Mobility Services – According to the needs of the child, Orientation and Mobility services are provided as directed on the child's IFSP or IEP, or as requested by the child's parent.

Consultation/Advocacy Services – Parent(s)/guardian(s) may request that a VIPS representative accompany them to planning meetings for the child's educational services, including IFSP and Admissions and Release Committee (ARC/IEP) meetings.

Family Supports – VIPS hosts family social events throughout the year. Parent and caregiver educational sessions are held regularly. VIPS also hosts an annual Family Retreat and Parent Conference weekend.

Over the years, VIPS has been visited by families from far and wide who are seeking high quality services for their child(ren) who are visually impaired. Some families have relocated to Louisville in order for their child(ren) to attend Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. Professionals from around the globe have come to the Louisville campus eager to hone the services they provide to young children with visual impairments by spending a day in Kids Town Preschool. VIPS provides ongoing consultation to agencies within many states eager to replicate Kids Town Preschool programming. Collaborations with universities and colleges, as

well as public and private school systems, are key to the mission undertaken by VIPS.

Parents can be devastated when they learn that their child is blind or visually impaired. The Can Do! Video Library from VIPS is another avenue of support and services provided. The DVDs offer parents of young children who are visually impaired practical and proven techniques that foster skill development and achieve independence. The Can Do! Video Library is sold nationally and internationally to enhance services provided in homes and preschools.

In the summer of 2018, VIPS introduced its newest video, "Every Child Can," offering a preschool-level perspective on the Expanded Core Curriculum for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (ECC). The ECC addresses nine critical skill areas of instruction for a student who is blind or visually impaired. These nine areas are in addition to and in support of the standard core curriculum adopted by statewide departments of education. The skills included in the ECC are the foundation of what must be learned in order to find success in school and in life. The objective of the video is to demystify the ECC for parents and teachers of young children who are visually impaired. The video encourages parents and

professionals to advocate for use of the ECC and to implement it at home, in the classroom, and in the community.

Today VIPS is a statewide agency in Kentucky and Indiana with a total annual budget of \$2.8 million. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, VIPS served 600 children and their families, providing 5,496 home- and community-visits. VIPS teachers and interventionists drove 251,254 miles to provide direct services to young children with blindness or low vision. VIPS was the first and continues to be the only nonprofit agency in Kentucky and Indiana providing vision-specific services to this population of children.

The Ohio State University Early Childhood Education and Visual Impairment Education Program

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Image 1. A picture of the Inaugural OSU ECEVI cohort

Through the collaborative efforts of the faculty and staff within the departments of Teaching and Learning and Educational Studies within the

College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University (OSU) and the support of the university administration, beginning in the autumn of 2018, OSU began offering a dual licensure, undergraduate program in early childhood education and special education for students with visual impairments (ECEVI). In an effort to increase the number of professionals prepared to teach children with visual impairments, this program provides a coherent curriculum for preservice teachers who are seeking specialties in both general and special education settings. Students enrolled in the program will take required licensure courses in both early childhood education (ECE) and special education for students with visual impairments (VI) to become dually licensed teachers.

Teacher education has changed dramatically in recent years, especially in expectations and requirements within colleges and universities. Teacher education programs have the responsibility of preparing today's graduates to work with diverse populations (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). Ely and Ostrasky (2018) pointed out the importance of creating programs within personnel preparation that address the needs specific to our youngest learners with visual impairments and their families. The Division for Visual Impairment and Deafblindness further supports this notion by stating that teachers need to be trained to support the unique

learning needs and interventions needed for early learners with visual impairments and their families (Hatton, Chen, Snyder, Smyth, Greeley, Anthony, Ely, Lind, Hillier, and Dewald, 2018). Through an examination of (1) the emergence of dual licensure programs in higher education, (2) consideration of the need for a dual licensure program for students with visual impairments, and (3) creation of the OSU ECEVI program, this article highlights key components of the newly established undergraduate program at OSU.

The Emergence of Dual Licensure Programs in Higher Education

Collaboration in teacher education, defined as the purposeful integration of general and special education at the preservice level and characterized by graduates earning two (or more) teaching licenses, is an unmistakable trend in current teacher preparation programs (Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011). Situated within a larger context of educational reform and an ongoing struggle to assure that all students are provided opportunity for learning under the guidance of an effective teacher, the incorporation of related disciplines into an interdisciplinary curriculum is one way to address needs of students with disabilities.

Shoemaker (1989) defines interdisciplinary curriculum as, “education that is organized in such a way that it cuts across subject-matter lines,

bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive” (p. 5). It is a curriculum derived from several related disciplines using collaboration and planning (Stayton & Miller, 1993).

Historically, special education licenses have been issued as stand-alone degrees, or as additional licensure earned after completion of a program designed specifically for special education (Blanton, Boveda, Munoz, & Pugach, 2017; Geiger, Crutchfield, & Mainzer, 2003; Geiger et al., 2014). In today’s schools, where students with disabilities are being included more and more in general education settings, questions are being raised about whether initial, stand-alone licensure provides enough training for special education teachers in inclusive settings (Blanton et al., 2017). These types of changes have led to the emergence of dual licensure programs – also referred to as *unified*, *merged*, *blended*, *combined*, and *integrated* programs – where pre-service teachers are trained for both special and general education settings (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Blanton et al., 1997; Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Bondy & Ross, 2005; Jenkins, Pateman, & Black, 2002; P.S. Miller & Stayton, 1998; Sands, Duffield, &

Parsons, 2007; Young, 2011). For the purposes of this article, the term *dual licensure* program will be used.

The Need for the Program

According to federal mandates, states are required to provide all students with a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). Critical shortages of special education teachers represent a serious challenge to achieving this goal for students with disabilities (Billingsley, 2003). In providing services to students with low-incidence disabilities, the availability of qualified special education teachers is limited; this is especially true when a direct focus is placed on the education of students who are blind or visually impaired. Nationally, the field of visual impairments has a teacher shortage. According to Summers, Leigh, and Arnold (1996), "The ability to ensure that children with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments, receive an appropriate education may be compromised because of the critical shortage of highly qualified personnel." Mason, Davidson, and McNerney (2000) estimated that by the year 2000, approximately 5,000 new teachers would be needed to meet the needs of students with visual impairments; however, according to Ferrell (2007) the United States was only producing about 250 new educational personnel in visual impairments each year.

The state of Ohio is experiencing the same trends. Currently 1,935 Ohio students are registered with the American Printing House for the Blind (2016) through the federal quota system, this number only includes students with the definition of “legal blindness.” According to the Ohio Department of Education database system, 98 teachers are licensed as an Intervention Specialist in Visual Impairment (ODE, 2013) in the state of Ohio. Data from the Ohio State School for the Blind Outreach team indicate that from 2005-2010 approximately 70% of students with visual impairments in the state were not receiving services due to funding or lack of qualified personnel (Fast, 2011). In addition, the service team found that the largest concentration of teachers were located around major cities in Ohio, with large portions of the state, specifically the entire Southeastern portion, identified as having low numbers of teachers of students with visual impairments.

ECEVI Program Development

Creation of the integrated ECEVI dual licensure program at OSU involved extensive collaboration among university faculty and staff in the departments of Teaching and Learning and Educational Studies, as well as staff from the Office of Educator Preparation. An integrated model was utilized in initial discussions among the team, when faculty and staff came

together to redesign two existing programs into one dual licensure program. The process began by examining both the ECE and VI programs. A crosswalk was designed to ensure that all coursework aligned with the standards for initial licensure by both the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The team spent many hours reviewing syllabi to determine what changes, if any, were needed within existing coursework, ensuring that all courses would reflect content needed to be licensed as both an intervention specialist in visual impairments and an early childhood education teacher.

After all reviews, the final model was designed with slight modifications to the existing ECE program to accommodate an additional 18 credits in disability-specific instruction required for students pursuing dual licensure. Plans outlined that students enrolled in the ECEVI Program will graduate with a diverse knowledge base, providing opportunities for employment in areas of need throughout both the state of Ohio and the nation. Early childhood content includes program outcomes designed to develop an in-depth knowledge of children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development to assist graduates in developing skills and disposition needed to become effective leaders and advocates. Visual impairment content expands upon the pre-requisite and ECE courses to

prepare highly-qualified teachers who can (1) teach and use assistive technology, (2) write IEPs, (3) determine accommodations based on formative and summative assessments, (4) teach and use Braille and Nemeth code at a proficient level, (5) teach and use VI specific equipment – including slate and stylus, abacus, and braillewriter, (6) address the expanded core curriculum, and (7) assess students using formal assessments, such as Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessments.

Diverse fieldwork and student teaching experiences that focus on placements involving both ECE settings and settings that provide a PK-12 band of student experiences with students who are visually impaired, will be provided for students enrolled in the ECEVI Program. Throughout these experiences, general and special education faculty and staff will work as a collective unit, sharing expertise to ensure this merged aspect of the program includes content critical for all preservice teachers, those in general and special education placements alike (Wysocki, 2017).

The First ECEVI Cohort

Once all coursework was finalized and plans to move forward were confirmed, Dr. Tiffany Wild met with curriculum committees at both the departmental level and college level to gain initial programming approval. Once this was received, the final program draft was sent for approval by

the university and, finally, the state of Ohio. Both Dr. Tiffany Wild and Dr. Danene Fast addressed the accreditation process, in conjunction with the Office of Educator Preparation, to ensure that final program assessments and goals aligned with CEC and NAEYC standards.

With all of the approvals in place, applications for the ECEVI Program went live through the university system in December of 2017. Dr. Christian Faltis, Department Chair of Teaching and Learning, and Dr. Ruth Lowery, Associate Department Chair of Teaching Learning, provided unwavering support for the ECEVI Program, allowing admission for a full cohort of undergraduate students.

In the fall of 2018, OSU welcomed 22 students into the Inaugural ECEVI cohort, with the understanding that they would be the first ever to complete the program. This group is comprised of both young men and women who are in their junior year of study at OSU. Hailing from within the state of Ohio, out-of-state, and international residences, the group is immersing themselves in full-time coursework, navigating both general education classes and VI specific classes, such as Visual Processes and Braille. In addition to their coursework, the current cohort has been actively engaged in the academic community, including their first professional poster presentations at the 2018 OCALICON conference in Columbus,

Ohio and an active promotion of Braille and the needs of students with visual impairments through an OSU campus club named the “Braille Buckeyes”.

https://activities.osu.edu/involvement/student_organizations/find_a_student_org?i=56630042-c536-450e-ba2c-d0f485a0d15a&l=B&c=Columbus&page=3

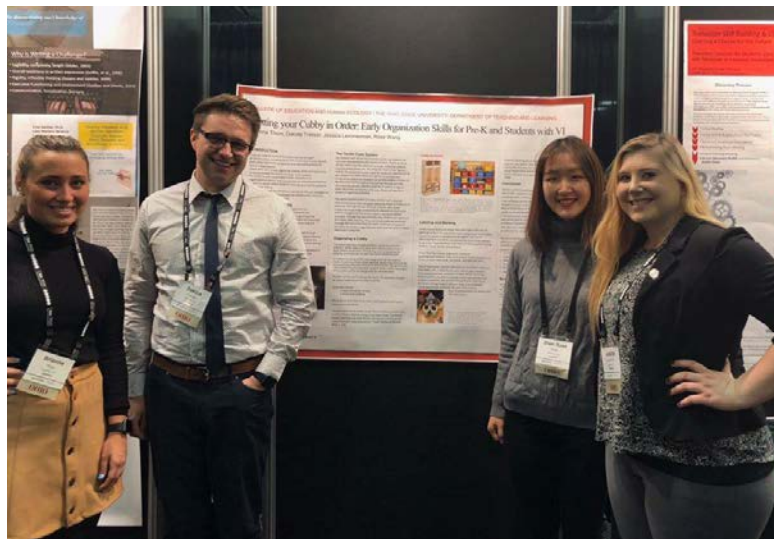


Image 2. Members of the ECEVI Cohort presenting a poster at OCalicon

Looking Forward

Upon program completion, graduates of the ECEVI Program will be eligible for dual licensure in both early childhood education and special education for students with visual impairments, providing them with a unique set of qualifications that will assist in improving services for all learners, including those with visual impairments. Expectations for these graduates include a (1) knowledge of the general education curriculum

when working as intervention specialists for students with visual impairments while, in turn, possessing (2) knowledge of diversity and individualized needs for all students with disabilities – with particular emphasis on the unique needs of students with vision loss, when working in the capacity of general education.

As this article goes to press, we are excited to share that applications for the second ECEVI cohort *-scheduled to begin in fall of 2019* – have begun to arrive with the expectation that we will host another full cohort of students from 2019 through 2021. As these future dates approach, we look forward to learning about how these uniquely prepared graduates will work to alleviate the teacher shortage across the country and, more importantly, work to meet the needs of their students with visual impairments as well as their families.



Image 3. Braille Buckeyes Logo [Please find them on Facebook]

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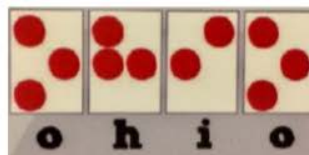
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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

CEC's Leadership Institute: A Look at the Future

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This year's Council on Exceptional Children's Leadership Conference typically held in Alexandria, Va., July 8-11, 2018, provided opportunities for various divisions/units within this organization to network, participate in valuable professional development, foster growth, and encourage advocacy and policy change through the Children and Youth Action Network. Those in attendance representing DVIDB were Nicole Johnson, President-Elect, Kathleen Stanfa, C.A.N. Coordinator, and Angel Perez, Board Member. The focus for the leadership institute was "Diversity with Intention." The opening session was presented by Vicki R. Deal-Williams, Chief Staff Officer for Multicultural Affairs for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and Arlene A. Pietranton, Chief Executive Officer of ASHA. These speakers shared information about the

benefits of building diversity, breaking old habits, and making the necessary changes to embrace diversity and inclusion through strategic planning and implementation. An interesting fact from ASHA is that they maintain an approximate 98% retention rate.

As the program progressed, CEC presenters Mikki Garcia and Sharon Rodriguez provided a glance into “A New Vision for the Future” by expounding on CEC’s new governance structures, and challenged the audience to envision what the volunteer experience within an organization would look like using a more intentional viewpoint as well as our own organization’s volunteer engagement practices. Other topics discussed at this conference:

- Policy and Advocacy
- Legal Issues, and Maintaining Unit and Division Microsites
- Public Relations and Social Media.

However, the session that captured my attention was “Growing Memberships and Managing Data” which explained how to grow and maintain membership within units and divisions, data keeping, and pragmatic, inexpensive ways to recruit new members. One suggestion for good marketing was the use of Facebook and the purchase of

advertisements to appeal to past members as well as potential new members.

Another valued presentation for me was “Planning PD: Tools Developing Successful Programs” which informed the audience of the results of a recent professional needs assessment in order to better understand the learning desires of practitioners in the field of special education. There were also recommendations of how to plan, develop, and follow through with successful professional development. Discussions among the audience focused on annual conferences, chats, webinars, book studies, low cost platforms, partnerships, and challenges.

Finally, a message to our division members; my ability to attend this conference was a privilege. It opened my eyes to the importance of building a strong organization by building strong relationships and renewing our passion for our field. We have to be willing to face our challenges and celebrate our triumphs as a team and recognize that we are the foundation for building future leaders. For if we aren’t willing to be leaders and mentor future leaders for the sake of our children’s futures, then, who will?

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