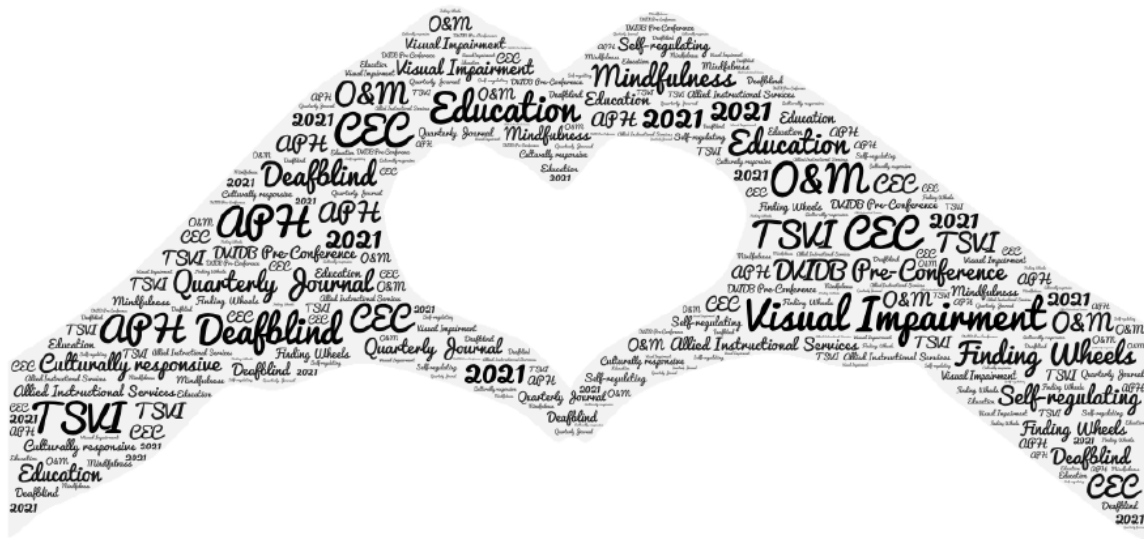


Winter 2021 Issue



Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Volume 66, Issue 1

The Voice and Vision of Special Education



Cover photo description: The cover photo has two hands making a heart shape with words inside the hands from the articles and information in the current Winter Issue of the *VIDBE-Q* journal.

Photo credit: The image was created on wordart.com

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CEC CONVENTION 2021 IS VIRTUAL

March 8th-13th (All sessions available on demand until March 31st)

Division on Visual Impairment and Deafblindness Sessions:

- * **DVIDB SHOWCASE:** Going Virtual for Students with Visual Impairments: Providing Education and Programs for Children Birth-22
- * Student-Centered AAC for Learners with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI): Assessment, Design, & Implementation.
- * Teaching Final Letter Contractions Using Constant Time Delay
- * The Family's Role in the Educational Community of Their Child with Significant Support Needs
- * Video Assisted Service Delivery for Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities
- * Developing Teacher Understanding of the Tactile Threshold for Learners with Deafblindness
- * Distance Learning for Young Children with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)
- * Effective Strategies for Determining Service Time for Students That Are Blind And Visually Impaired
- * Stepping into Inclusive Interdisciplinary Learning with Dramatic Inquiry: Promoting Improved Student Outcomes for Braille Literacy.
- * Students with Visual Impairments Can Be in the Marching Band Too!
- * Supporting Social Flourishing: A Peer-Mediated Intervention to Develop ECC Skills
- * Tactile Tangible Symbol Systems: Their Design, Use, and Success for Three Learners with Visual Impairment
- * Who is Counted in Child Count? Understanding Population Data for Students with Visual Impairments
- * Using a Cohort Model to Address Cortical Visual Impairment in New York City
- * Creating Design Modifications and a New App for Students Navigating a High-Traffic Space
- * Using System of Least Prompts to Teach Self-Care Skills to Students with Multiple Disabilities, Including Deafblindness
- * Promoting and Supporting STEM for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired
- * Promoting Route Knowledge Through 3-D Printed Tactile Maps: A Pilot Study
- * Access, Supports, and Services for Students with Deafblindness in the General Education Classroom and Beyond
- * An Analysis of Ten Years of Guidance by the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness
- * Functional Vision Assessment: Delphi Study Results and Next Steps
- * Access, Strategies, and Tools for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired in the Virtual Environment

Register @ <https://exceptionalchildren.org/events/cec-2021-convention-expo/registration>

Message from the Editor

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Happy 2021! In the Winter 2021 issue of the *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly* journal, we highlight the upcoming preconference for DVIDB. We are excited to start the year sharing some of the great work of our preconvention sponsors, as well as think ahead to all of our amazing preconvention speakers in the field.

The issue begins and ends with an article from two of our preconvention sponsors (American Printing House for the Blind and Allied Instructional Services). In these articles you will learn more about the great work that each of our sponsors are doing in the field. We thank our sponsors for their continued support and for making the 2021 preconvention possible.

Are you thinking about signing up for the preconvention sessions but want to know more about the topics? Read on to learn more about the three preconvention sessions. Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum, Monique Coleman, and Linda Hagood share a sneak peak of the content for each session at the preconvention. Registration is still open, so click on the link below to register for preconvention.

Register @ <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dvidb-council-for-exceptional-children-preconference-event-registration-128400139273>

DVIDB ON FACEBOOK

Join Our Facebook Family

If you are passionate about the education of children and youth with visual impairments and deafblindness, including those with additional disabilities, please become part of our social network on Facebook. If you have a Facebook account, you can find our page and become a fan by searching for Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness.



For those who do not have a Facebook account, you can view our page by going to the following URL:
<https://www.facebook/pages/Division-on-Visual-Impairments-and-Deafblindness/248244976215>

President's Message

Nicole Johnson, Ed.D.

Professor, Kutztown University

njohnson@kutztown.edu



Welcome to the winter issue of the *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly* journal. Throughout this issue, we feature several articles about our preconvention sponsors and presenters.

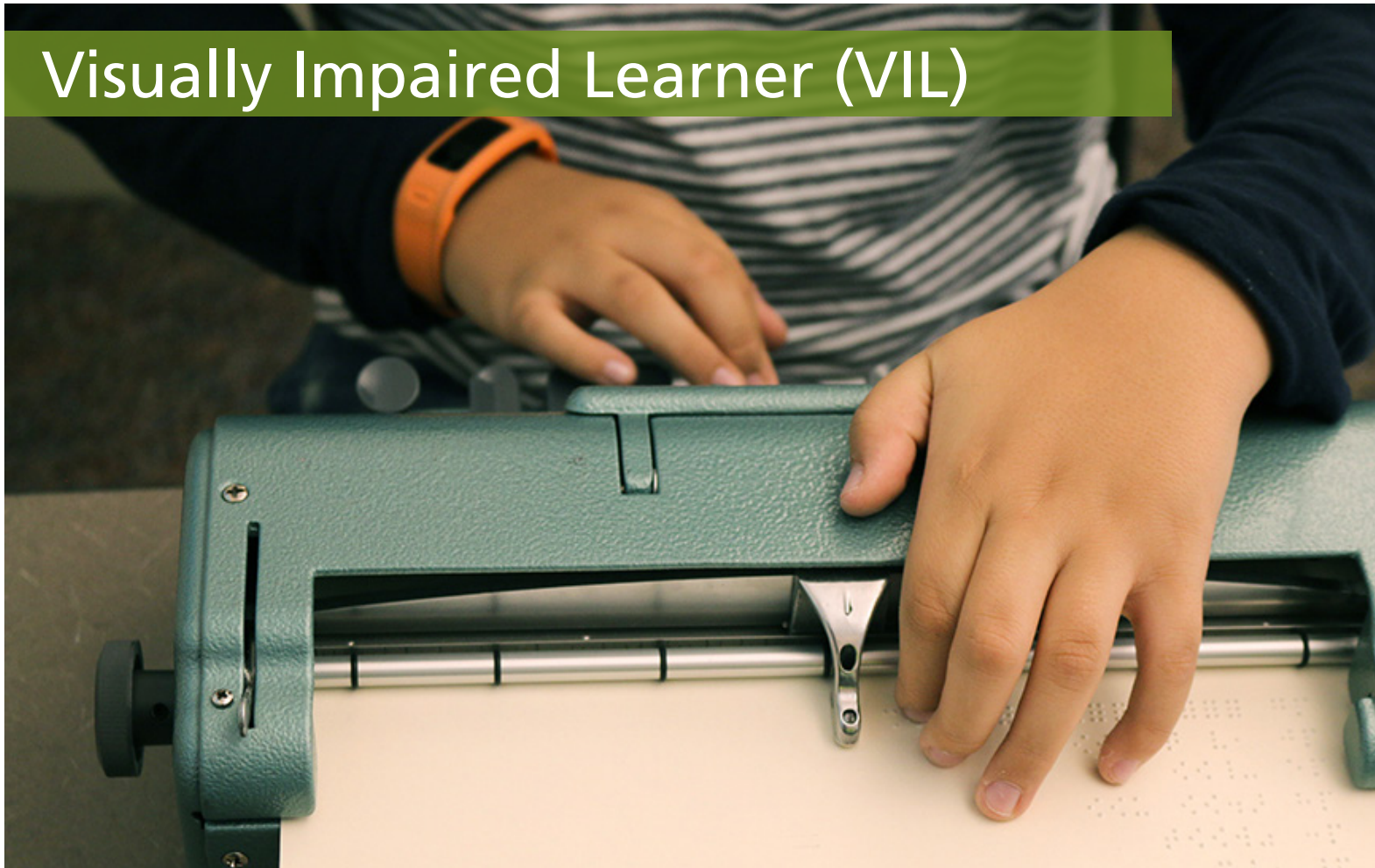
DVIDB leadership has been busy working on our 2021 preconvention. Our pre-conference day will be held on March 6th, 2021 from 9:00AM-4:00PM. The day will be free to DVIDB members and \$50 to nonmembers. Preconvention will

offer up to six ACVREP professional development hours. The day will consist of Dr. Penny Rosenblum discussing “Finding Wheels”, Monique Coleman, M.A. on “Creating Culturally Responsive Approaches to Teaching: Words of Wisdom for TSVIs and O&Ms”, and Linda Hagood, M.A. on “Reading, Writing, and Self-Regulation: The Importance of Touch Movement, & Relationships”. I am so excited about these speakers sharing their research and expertise on these crucial topics. Thank you to our sponsors (Allied Instructional Services, Maryland School for the Blind, and American Printing House for the Blind in helping to make this day possible.

I am excited to look ahead to the CEC 2021 Convention in March. Although we cannot be together face to face for CEC 2021, having the conference virtually allows more educators, students, and families to attend. The Division on Visual Impairment and Deafblindness will be featuring over 22 sessions that will be available on demand from March 8th through the 31st. As well as having sessions available on demand, the conference will have some sessions live between March 8th and March 13th. We hope you can tune into some of these and connect with others in the field.

I want to take time to thank the DVIDB executive board for all of your time and dedication to our division. Your work is greatly appreciated. Enjoy this issue!

Visually Impaired Learner (VIL)



Quick facts

- Part-time to work with your schedule
- Flexible, hybrid cohort model
- 44 credits for an endorsement
- 65 credits for a master's degree with initial licensure
- More than 700 hours of field experience

Learn strategies and tools to teach visually impaired learners

The Visually Impaired Learner (VIL) program is a nationally accredited graduate program to prepare teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs), birth to 21, including those with multiple disabilities. Nationwide there is a critical need for TVIs, particularly in rural areas of the U.S. Portland State University offers the only program for TVI training in the Pacific Northwest using an innovative and flexible hybrid model.

Whether you are seeking an endorsement or pursuing a master's degree with initial licensure, you will acquire skills to provide high quality services to students with visual impairments and help them fully access the general education curriculum. Hands-on, field-based learning activities are included in most courses.

3/19



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Department of
Special Education

APH Again Co-sponsors the 2021 CEC DVIDB Pre-Conference

MaryGen Boley, mboley@aph.org, &

Tristan Pierce, tpierce@aph.org

American Printing House

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) has been a fixture in the CEC Convention & Expo exhibit hall for more years than a typical person has fingers and toes. In February 2018, APH joined the CEC Division of Visual Impairment and Deafblindness (DVIDB) and the Florida Instructional Materials Center as co-sponsors of a preconference in Tampa, titled, “Growing Good Communicators: Sensory Foundations for Concepts and Symbols” presented by Millie Smith. APH displayed many products, but the pinnacle products were the [Sensory Learning Kit](#), [SAM: Symbols and Meaning Kit](#), and [Tactile Connections Kit: Symbols for Communication](#). Vision professionals know these three products as the APH Intervention Continuum. We used this preconference to debut many of [APH’s sensorimotor learning videos on YouTube](#). This inaugural DVIDB preconference played to a full house of attendees, and the Florida weather was spectacular.

The following year, Indianapolis welcomed CEC attendees in late January and an uninvited guest—named Polar Vortex—crashed the party. Cars stalled and airplanes remained grounded, but the presenters and attendees held strong and made the DVIDB preconference have a little extra meaning and appreciation that year. We held the preconference in the Indianapolis Convention Center, which turned out to be a wise decision considering several of the conference hotels are connected to the convention center, eliminating the need to travel outside in the dangerously low temperatures. Indiana State University and Allied Instructional Services joined APH and DVIDB as co-sponsors. The morning session featured Dr. Catherine Nelson, lead author of APH’s [*Child-guided Strategies: The Van Dijk Approach to Assessment*](#). This book with accompanying videos is a staple in teacher-prep programs for deafblindness. The afternoon session titled, “Teaching Concepts to Children with Visual Impairments and Deafblindness Using the BEST Elements of Dance” was enjoyable for all and had attendees standing up, dancing, and staying happily warm. The session leaders were Dr. Nelson, Kristen Paul, Pamela Geber Handman, and Brooke Barnhill.

The 2020 CEC Convention & Expo landed us in Portland, OR. The Columbia Regional Program in Portland partnered with APH and DVIDB to co-sponsor the February preconference. Diane Sheline was the presenter for a full day of “Implementing Effective Instruction for Students with Cortical Visual

Impairments—Moving from Assessment to Intervention.” Between what Diane brought and APH shipped, the room had about eight tables of [CVI-friendly products](#). APH treated attendees with a pre-release demonstration of the [LED Mini-Lite Box](#).

For those of you who are avid CEC attendees and look forward each year to the annual DVIDB preconference, we will not let the novel coronavirus pandemic disappoint you. APH, DVIDB, Allied Instructional Services, and the Maryland School for the Blind will co-sponsor a virtual pre-conference on March 3, 2021. This year the preconference will cover three sessions and APH will have a bottomless, virtual travel bag full of relevant old and new, tried and true, products and resources. Below is just a small preview of what attendees can expect.

Do you know about [GoodMaps](#)? Founded in 2019 and based out of Louisville, KY, GoodMaps (previously named Access Explorer) was created by APH with a simple mission: to further the cause of accessible navigation. Realizing that the mission of universal accessible navigation is limited by the lack of indoor digital mapping, the GoodMaps platform and company were born.

Are you familiar with one of the latest books published by APH Press, [Access Technology for Blind and Low Vision Accessibility](#)? Hint— the central theme of the textbook is equity, and it emphasizes opportunities for independence,

leadership, and timely access to information for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Have you heard about the [APH ConnectCenter](#)? This online resource includes [FamilyConnect](#), [CareerConnect](#), [VisionAware](#), [ConnectCalendar](#), and the APH ConnectCenter Information and Referral Line (an 800 number that connects people across the U.S. and Canada with resources in their area). The APH ConnectCenter offers curated advice and resources to assist children, parents, adults, and job seekers who are blind or visually impaired, and their associated professionals, leading to greater independence and success in their lives.

Why the relationship between APH and CEC Division of Visual Impairment and Deafblindness (DVIDB)? Well, besides the fact that CEC is one of the largest special education conventions in the nation, we are also united in our commitment to the field of blindness. Both our missions—to provide products and services that both enhance and advance the education and lifelong success of individuals who are blind or visually impaired—directly align. “In our field, we are always thinking of better ways to serve our students and clients. Each person we serve has their own unique needs, and our job, as their advocate in education, is to find solutions to help meet those challenges,” said APH President, Dr. Craig Meador. “While COVID-19 may represent one of the larger challenges that has been thrown our way, this field responded in the only way we know—by partnering and working

collaboratively to find solutions to ensure our students and adult clients continued to receive the services and support they need, even during a pandemic.”

In 2021, as in years past, APH is a proud participant in the CEC Convention & Expo, and we are honored to be a sponsor of the CEC DVIDB pre-conference.



Photo description: A teacher presents to a young boy an object symbol in the now container of his object calendar. The boy looks in the now container, which is an APH black Expandable Calendar Box.

Orientation and Mobility



Quick facts

- 25– to 34–credits for a graduate certificate
- 45 credits for licensure and a master's degree
- Flexible cohort model
- The only TVI and O&M training in the Pacific Northwest!

Become an orientation and mobility specialist

O&M Specialists are professionals who teach individuals with visual impairments, including those with deafblindness, how to travel safely, efficiently, and with purpose in a variety of environments. Students in the O&M program gain the professional skills and preparation to complete the international certification exam through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

The O&M program is offered as an extension of PSU's long-standing Visually Impaired Learner program that has been preparing teachers of children with visual impairments (TVIs) to work with school-age children for over 50 years.

3/19



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Finding Wheels: A Tool for Youth and Adults in Their 20s to Build Their Skills as Nondrivers or Potential Low Vision Drivers

L. Penny Rosenblum,

American Foundation for the Blind

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Target Audience: Attendees of pre-conference, TVIs, O&M specialists, administrators

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, learning the complexities of travel as a nondriver or potential low vision driver, was a challenge for many travelers in their teens or early 20s. I'm not talking those O&M skills such as crossing a complex intersection or numbering systems. Rather, I'm talking about those subtler skills such as how to hire a driver, what to share with individuals about your visual impairment as it relates to travel, and understanding the pros and cons of each travel method. For those who have the potential to become low vision drivers, understanding the laws, process for learning to use a bioptic, and the impact of weather conditions on driving is important.

As I write this piece on October 26, TSBVI is soon to release *Finding Wheels: Strategies to Build Independent Travel Skills for Those with Visual Impairments*. Written for the traveler going into the third decade of the 21st century, this book contains a wealth of information including scenarios of 5 travelers and 16 activities. Throughout the book are notes for families and professionals.

Finding Wheels can be used independently by travelers, by a professional with individual or small groups of travelers, by families exploring nondriving and/or low vision driving together, or in other ways that TVIs, O&M specialists, or rehab professionals find that work for their travelers. Travelers may not wish to explore each of the 10 chapters or may choose what order they explore them in.

During my pre-conference workshop, I will walk participants through the 10 chapters of *Finding Wheels* giving examples of how this resource can be used with a wide audience of travelers on their transportation journey. Photos and video clips will be used to illustrate key points. Time for questions and answers will be provided along with some “hands-on” activities. I am confident, no matter your professional role, you’ll come away with some ideas of ways you can assist your travelers in finding their own wheels!



***Council for Exceptional Children Pre-Convention
March 3rd 2021
9:00-4:30 (3 sessions) FREE to DVIDB Members/\$50
for non-members***



Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum

Session 1: 9:00-12:00

***Finding Wheels: A Tool for Youth and Adults in Their
20s to Build Their Skills as Nondrivers or Potential Low
Vision Drivers***

Session 2: 1:00-2:30

**Creating Culturally Responsive Approaches to
Teaching: Words of Wisdom for TSVIs and O&Ms**



Monique Coleman, M.A.



Linda Hagood, M.A.

Session 3: 2:45-4:15

**Reading, Writing, and Self-Regulation: The
Importance of Touch, Movement & Relationships**

Register @ <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dvidb-council-for-exceptional-children-preconference-event-registration-128400139273>

***Thankyou to DVIDB Pre-Convention Sponsors: Allied Instructional Services, Maryland School for the Blind, &
American Printing House for the Blind***

EARN UP TO 6 HOURS OF ACVREP CREDIT/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOURS

Culturally Responsive Approaches to Teaching: Words of Wisdom for TSVIs and O&Ms

Monique Coleman,

Rutgers University,

monique@vistaeducation.com

The shifting demographic landscape of America's K-12 schools is a widely recognized phenomena, highlighted by the recent milestone of students of color representing 51% of the nation's school aged population (Hussar & Bailey, 2019). This trajectory is expected to continue in the years ahead. According to U.S. Department of Education data projections, the public school enrollment of students of color is projected to increase as the percentage of white students declines (Hussar & Bailey, 2019). Recent education data confirm that, with the exception of a predominance of males, the demographics of blind and visually impaired students are similar to the general education population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Consequently, the implications of the massive shift to a majority person of color student population on teaching and learning are important considerations for professionals in the field of blindness and visual impairment education. This article provides an overview of an approach to

effectively teaching blind and visually impaired students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is a central theoretical underpinning of K-12 pedagogical reform efforts focused on improving educational success among students from historically underperforming racial and ethnic groups. The origin of CRP dates back nearly two decades to Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1992) landmark research on successful teachers of African American students. Ladson-Billings (1992) attributed the teachers' remarkable successes to what she called culturally relevant teaching, a model that empowers historically underperforming students of color academically, emotionally, socially, and politically. Ladson-Billings' (1992) framework posited three key tenets: a) educational success: maintaining high expectations and ample opportunities for learners to be successful; b) cultural competence: understanding and valuing one's own cultural background as well as the cultures of others; and c) critical consciousness: developing students' awareness of cultural norms, values, and institutions that produce and maintain inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Over the past twenty years, a number of educational scholars have engaged and extended Ladson-Billings' original concept (Alim & Paris, 2017; Gay, 2010; Muhammad, 2020; Hammond, 2015). Notably, Gay (2010) presented CRP as a

way to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students by using culture as a conduit of instruction and student engagement (Gay, 2010). Hammond (2015) advanced CRE as a tool for stimulating cognitive development among culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Hammond, 2015). A more recent iteration, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), seeks to not only be responsive to CLD students, but to also sustain their languages, literacies, and ways of being. CSP is grounded in the twin goals of promoting educational success among historically marginalized CLD learners and fostering positive, cultural pluralism in school settings (Alim & Paris, 2017). In this article, I reference CRP with an inclusive understanding that incorporates the aforementioned complementary strands of the pedagogical framework.

The Case for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy has become a widely recognized framework for educational reform, and there is a growing research base demonstrating its benefits. Empirical studies have shown the model's efficacy in terms of increasing confidence, interest, and engagement in school among historically underperforming CLD students (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2003) and boosting their academic success (Milner, 2011; Tate, 1995). This flourishing CRP research and practice has exclusively focused on sighted students;

however, given the demographic similarities between blind and visually impaired students and the general education population, CRP deserves greater attention in the field of blindness and visual impairment education.

Although there is some research on culturally competent services with blind and visually impaired students (Conroy, 2005; Correa-Torres & Durando, 2011; Knowlton, 1997; Milian, 1999, 2001), widespread and comprehensive integration of CRP into teacher preparation and professional development for VI professionals remains elusive. Yet, the need for CRP teaching approaches that decenter traditional, European, middle-class norms and expectations around teaching, learning, and knowing is intensified by the glaring racial and ethnic differences between TVIs and O&Ms, who are overwhelmingly white (Correa-Torres & Durando, 2011), and the blind and visually impaired student population. Furthermore, there are some data that point to racial disparities in reading achievement and comprehension among blind and visually impaired children (Blackorby et al., 2007). The integration of CRP into VI professional practice can provide a powerful framework for promoting increased opportunities for success among students from historically underperforming racial and ethnic groups.

Becoming a Culturally Responsive VI Professional

To initiate the process of becoming a culturally responsive professionals, TVIs and O&Ms can assess of their own cultural beliefs, attitudes, and norms. There are cultural differences around concepts such as time, personal space, attitudes towards elders, and appropriate touch that can impact interactions between students and their teachers. The first step in developing cultural competency is recognizing those differences. With this understanding, VI professionals can begin to build their cross-cultural knowledge of their students, which involves learning from their families and other informational resources. When VI professionals increase their cultural competency, they are able to widen their understanding of their students' different ways of being and knowing.

Building cultural competency also lays the groundwork for students' cultural knowledge base, language, and literacy practices to become conduits for their instruction in areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Youth (ECC). CRP is a powerful pedagogical tool that can be applied to teaching and learning disability-specific skills and knowledge in the ECC. For example, authentic, culturally diverse reading and writing activities can form the basis of a tactile/braille literacy program with CLD students, including those who are English learners. Culturally responsive instructional approaches and materials can also be used to facilitate the development of tactile/abacus math skills and

visual efficiency skills. These and other CRP applications for VI professionals will be further addressed in my DVIDB Pre-Convention presentation, with the aim of encouraging and supporting VI professionals to adopt become culturally responsive practitioners.

Note about disability language used in this manuscript:

I purposefully used identity-first language (e.g., blind and visually impaired students) throughout the manuscript, in accordance with *APA (7th Ed.)* guidelines, to demonstrate my solidarity with and respect for blindness communities who have expressed preferences for empowerment through identity and the corresponding use of identity-first language. Furthermore, the use of identity-first language is a sign of respect for the articulated desire of blindness communities for others to adopt identity-first language when referring to individuals in their disability group. Additionally, identity-first language is the most appropriate choice for the topic of my presentation and manuscript. A core tenant of Culturally Responsive Teaching is to affirm and sustain students' cultural identities, which, similar to disability identity, supports an individual's self-determination.

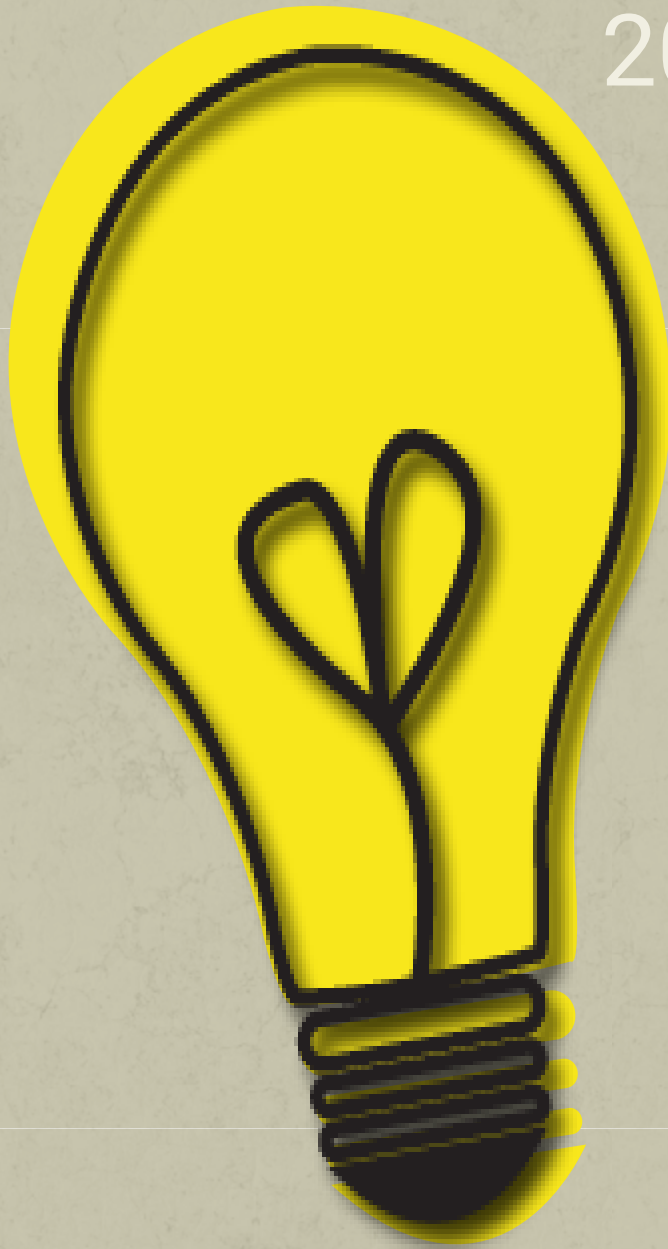
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Submit an Article for 2021



2021 Submission Dates

Spring

Convention
Issue
March 31st

Summer
Back to
School

June 1st

Email the editor- Kathleen Farrand
Kathleen.Farrand@asu.edu

Reading, Writing and Self-Regulating: Mindfulness and Movement Activities as a Context for Language and Literacy Learning

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Amy Parker, Portland State University, atp5@pdx.edu

Children and adolescents with self-regulatory skills can focus their attention, control their emotions and manage their thinking, behavior and feelings (Blair & Diamond, 2008). Self-regulation contributes to both academic and social success (Durlak et al., 2011), and in efforts to engage learners, schools have begun to include mindfulness, yoga, and meditation in social emotional learning curricula (Gillen & Gillen, 2007; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Children who are blind and visually impaired have been shown to use emotional regulation strategies less often than their sighted peers (Salimi et al., 2016). Some eye conditions, especially those with a neurological base, seem to be associated more with self-regulation challenges, including optic nerve hypoplasia (Fink & Borchert, 2011), Leber Congenital Amaurosis (Fazzi et al., 2007), Norrie's Syndrome (Dale, 2005), CHARGE Syndrome (Hartshorne et al., 2005), Congenital

Rubella Syndrome (Chess, 1977), Cortical/ Cerebral Visual Impairment (Lueck & Dutton, 2015), and Retinopathy of Prematurity (Jure et al., 2016). There is evidence of effective interventions to support self-regulation in children who are blind and visually impaired with additional disabilities, including deafblindness (Nelson et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2017).

In this active learning session, we will describe a transdisciplinary and inclusive approach to self-regulation for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those who have additional disabilities including autism, intellectual disabilities, attention deficit disorders, and deafblindness. We will share a variety of movement and sensory-based activities to develop students' awareness and management of their own emotions and attentional levels. These activities include children's yoga (Gillen & Gillen, 2017; Hagood, 2008), meditation, mantras (Roberts, 2008; Khalsa, 2019), and creative movement / dance (Nelson et al., 2017). We will suggest ways to include literacy instruction in self-regulation activities, such as use of tactile symbol activity sequences, writing and enacting yoga stories, building personal emotion meters, co-creating personal mantras, songs, and drama. The activities presented are appropriate for a wide range of student ages and skill levels. We will encourage teams to work together by incorporating input from many disciplines, including speech language

pathology, education of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility, occupational and physical therapy, and counseling.

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. identify factors that are commonly associated with emotional / attentional dysregulation in blind and visually impaired individuals (eye conditions, experience, trust, neurological functioning).
2. perform and teach at least three self-regulation activities with embedded literacy activities that can be used with students who are blind and visually impaired.
3. access a variety of resources to support teaching self-regulation to children and teens with visual impairment.

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Allied Instructional Services: Receives Recognition as One of America's Fastest-Growing Private Companies

Mary Hall,

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Allied Instructional Services, based in Ashland, Virginia, with a reputation of providing high quality Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Instructors and other special education and therapy services, was recently recognized for the 4th consecutive year by Inc. Magazine on its annual Inc. 5000 list, the most prestigious ranking of the nation's fastest-growing private companies. The list represents a unique look at the most successful companies within the American economy's most dynamic segment—its independent small businesses. Microsoft, Dell, Domino's Pizza, Pandora, Timberland, LinkedIn, Yelp, Zillow, and many other well-known names gained their first national exposure as honorees on the Inc. 5000. The company, owned by Karen Walker, a Florida State University trained teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired and Orientation and

Mobility Instructor, has also been recognized each of the past 4 years by FSU on its annual Seminole 100 list of the 100 fastest-growing businesses owned by FSU alumni.



Photo Description: Karen Walker, Owner/President of Allied Instructional Services, receiving award at Seminole 100 Celebration.

Karen Walker, after privately contracting her services as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired and orientation and mobility services for several years, founded AIS in 2010, in hopes of reaching more individuals with specialized needs. AIS began partnering with schools and government agencies to provide them with the professional staff and programs needed for supporting the education,

growth, development, and life skills of individuals with blindness and visual impairments. Since its inception, the company has grown to over 160 services providers throughout the mid and southeast and has expanded its offerings to include teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, sign language interpreters, speech and language pathologists and school psychologists. The company has also expanded from only providing face-to-face services, to offering virtual services and a hybrid of the two, as necessary for ensuring students continue to receive their needed instruction and therapy no matter what their current learning environment may be.

When asked what being on the Inc. 5000 means to her, Ms. Walker expresses that she is *“extremely blessed by the success AIS has experienced. This means we are continuing to impact more lives! I truly believe that our success is due to the fact that I, along with my other administrators and service providers, are not driven by money or gaining the next contract, but by the desire to serve more individuals and enabling others to succeed. If we ever lose that as our focus, I firmly believe that would all change. I am and will always be a teacher first and a business owner second”*.

AIS strives to ensure that the students and adults they serve receive appropriate, affective high-quality educational and therapy services. All members of the AIS administrative team come from special education backgrounds and are

committed to seeing that all students succeed. Allied Instructional Services, unlike typical staffing companies, has a structured support system in place that benefits both the service providers and the schools and agencies that AIS serves. The support system not only gives the providers ongoing continuing education opportunities specific to their service area but also a tier of individuals to go to for support and collaboration. This structure also gives each of the school districts and agencies it serves additional contacts within the company that are knowledgeable in their area of the service provision.

In addition to providing instructional services, AIS works diligently to promote awareness of the careers in special education in which there is a critical needs shortage of professionals. The AIS teams are constantly thinking of ways to promote the fields and encourage others to spread the word.

Karen Walker states, *“People can’t go into a field that they don’t even know exists. I am so glad that I grew up near the Virginia Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired that enabled me to become aware of my profession at a young age allowing me to find and follow my passion. It is such a rewarding and fun job. Most people do not even realize there are professions dedicated to teaching only the blind and/or deaf. One can be down on the floor trying to get a blind child to take his first step in the morning and then be teaching someone braille or how to cross intersections with a cane after lunch”*.

While the growth of AIS has been remarkable, for which Ms. Walker is very thankful, she still believes it could be greater. She states that the growth of AIS is not hindered by the need for the company's services, but its ability to locate high quality licensed teachers and therapists. She realizes that every unfilled job opening out there means that there are more than likely students in need of services necessary for their independence and success. She hopes her company's recognition on the Inc. 5000 and Seminole 100 Lists will somehow bring more of an awareness of the critical need shortage of teachers and therapists in these specialized areas and an awareness of the wonderful career opportunities available.

For more information about Allied Instructional Services, you can visit them on the web at www.alliedinstructional.com.

VIDBE-Q 2021 Convention Issue



The intended purpose of the Spring 2021 convention issue is to provide manuscripts aimed at practitioners about presenter contributions to the CEC 2021 program and work related to the field of visual impairments and deafblindness. This will allow those who were unable to attend your session to know more about your work.

Guidelines:

- 3-5 pages
- Tables, images and/or figures should have a text description
- References
- APA formatting (7th Edition)
- 12 point, Times New Roman font
- Author information for title: Name, affiliation, and email address
- Please acknowledge previously published work after the title information

Email your manuscript submission
to Kathleen.Farrand@asu.edu.

Deadline for submissions: March 31, 2021



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