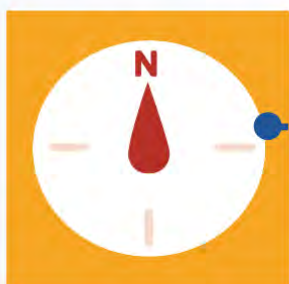


# Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

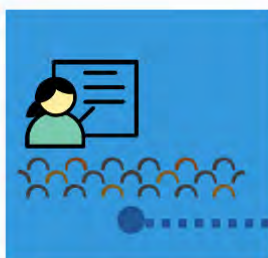
## Summer 2017

### Volume 62 Issue 3



Going to College

Navigating



Cooking

Camping

Training Teachers



Working with Dogs



The Voice and Vision of Special Education



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The voice and vision of special education

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This is a publication of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Visual Impairments and DeafBlindness (CEC-DVIDB). Advertisements included in this issue are not endorsements of products or services, and individual views of authors are not necessarily the official position of CEC and/or DVIDB.



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# Message from the Editor and Co-Guest Editor

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We are excited to share with you the Summer 2017 issue of the *Visual Impairments and Deafblind Education Quarterly* journal. This issue shares a lot of thought-provoking articles full of ideas and opportunities for growth in the field of VI and DB.

This issue begins with descriptions of 3 different summer camps that provide programming for students with visual impairments. The first article describes the multiple summer camp experiences provided to children and teens with visual impairments through Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind. The second article focuses on the loudest week of the year at Leader Dogs for the Blind. During this week, teens with visual impairments learn valuable navigation and leadership skills to develop independence. And the third article shares information about the Summer Academy, a summer camp experience from the perspective of future teachers of students with visual impairments. These 3 articles are intended to build awareness about summer opportunities and experiences for students with visual impairments and their teachers.

Additionally, this issue provides a review of *College Bound: A Guide for Students with Visual Impairments* in which the author shares her thoughts about the usefulness of this tool for

students with visual impairments and those who support them in adjusting to college. This article is followed by an overview of Indiana State University's visual impairment licensure program.

We hope you find inspiration and motivation in these articles as you begin the new school year. Please enjoy these wonderful contributions to the field of visual impairments and deafblindness.

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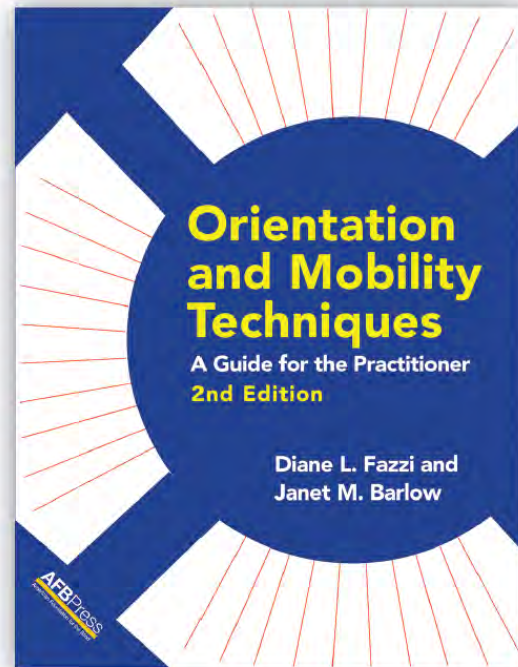
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## President's Message

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Summer is upon us and I can't be more excited. I use this time each year to spend time with family and friends, catch-up on projects from the previous year, and look forward with anticipation at the next school year.

This summer issue is a reflection of that work. We highlight camp experiences that allow our students to spend time with friends and future teachers to engage with students, catch-up on some reading with a book review, and look forward to the next school year by highlighting a university program. Our editor, Kathleen Farrand, did a great job putting together a summer reading experience for our members.

I also want to take this time to reflect on the work of our division. Our constitution committee is hard at work examining the current committee structures and providing new language for our constitution that will reflect the activities of our division. This work will be up for a vote during our upcoming elections. This will also allow our organization to provide strong direction for our committees and hopefully get more of our members involved.

Writing about elections reminds me to ask you to please consider joining our division and providing leadership and service to our field. The experience of being president of this

organization is a highlight of my career. I have enjoyed meeting so many new people, learning about CEC and the work they do for our students and profession, and learning from our membership. I am forever grateful to be given this opportunity. Therefore, I challenge all of you to join the fun! Please consider running for a position. A call for elections was sent out earlier this month.

Thank you to our members and their dedication to our organization. I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer!



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## Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind: Teaching, learning, building

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**Greg Botting,**

OUB Camps alumnus,

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Imagine you're in a world where you're expected to have a job and live on your own, but you don't know how to act appropriately in front of interviewers. You're not sure if your clothes are a good match. You have trouble managing your money in a store. You can't even cook much for yourself, beyond warming up a frozen dinner in the microwave.

When the Michigan School for the Blind (MSB) closed in 1994, opportunities for children who are blind or have low vision to learn basic skills to help them live independently were significantly reduced in Michigan. One of the facilities operated by MSB was an outdoor education center on the west side of Michigan. Fearing that the property would be sold, Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind (OUB) formed to try and save it. Once successful, they quickly took on the role of teaching valuable skills to students who are blind or have low vision.

A hallmark of OUB then, and today, was to hire young adults who are also blind or have low vision as camp staff, which allowed for the best learning experience for campers and gave many staffers an important resume builder. OUB counselors and other staff members truly understand the challenges of blindness and live it – and succeed - every day. OUB campers and staff have gone on to become successful teachers, musicians, government employees, researchers and business owners.

OUB, in its 23rd year, now operates on the west side of Grand Rapids at Camp Optimist, a 120-acre camp with lots of trails, woods, ponds, and sand dunes to explore. While the location and structure of their programs have changed, their mission has not: “building life skills, self-confidence and independence for children and young adults who are blind or have low vision”.



*Campers go canoeing.*

OUB provides a small and intensive summer camp experience for up to six children who are blind or have low vision and/or youth at each of their camps. OUB Camps focus on having fun and doing all the things most people think of at summer camp – boating, swimming, hiking, nature programs,

sleeping in tents, and arts and crafts, but also include hands-on sessions on cooking, gardening, outdoor activities and social skills. The majority of OUB staff are blind or have low vision. OUB believes that people who are blind should teach people who are blind. Our counselors are mentors for our campers, and for them to work with someone who is successful and has the same eye condition is incredibly helpful in bolstering self-worth and confidence.

In 2017, Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind offered four sessions of camp: a cooking and service week for ages 10-19, a cooking and music camp for ages 7-14, a slightly shorter camp for elementary age students, and finally an eight-day adventure trip for ages 12-19. Even though these camps have a different focus, they all have things in common; campers will cook every day, work on social skills—just how do you shake someone’s hand when you can’t see that hand, anyway?, get campers—many from urban areas—out in the woods and garden,

participating in adapted sports, playing games, going on field trips, and having fun while doing it!



*A camper feels the flowers.*

One thing we understand at camp – it takes most children who are blind or have low vision 100 more repetitions for them to learn how to do something like tying their shoes than it does for kids who can use their eyes to see. We have the patience to let our campers explore how to accomplish a task on their own, with verbal suggestions, and when needed, with hand-over-hand help. Children and young adults who are given the freedom to discover a way to do something are much more likely to be successful.

On field trips, there is time for real-world application of these skills. Last summer, for example, everyone attended a minor league baseball game—where they spoke with a woman



with low vision who runs her own food stand and practiced their money and social skills by purchasing food from park vendors, visited a local botanical garden and sculpture park, checked out a local organic gardening program at a local university, helped at a local food program for kids in need, went canoeing and rustic camping in northern lower Michigan and much more.

At all of our camps, campers sleep in tents which requires them to keep their personal belongings organized, listening to crickets and owls as they fall asleep and the birds that sing to wake them up each morning! Staying in a close environment encourages them to interact with each other politely and helps them learn to navigate situations that are a bit unpredictable and challenging. They learn about our natural environment, how to conserve our planet's valuable resources, participate in invasive species control, and much more.



*Campers feel animal fur.*

Attending summer camp also helps our campers understand that they have to be responsible for themselves. We have taught a number of campers to shower, wash their own hair, use silverware, tie their shoes and much more. When a camper decides that these are skills they WANT to have, it's easier for parents and teachers to teach them. At camp, they often find that motivation to be independent!

The skills that our campers learn are invaluable. We find that social skills are the hardest for our students to learn. It is estimated that over 80% of human communication is non-verbal. This puts our kids in a tough situation. Not only can they not imitate others' behavior to learn to use their hands and body appropriately to send the message they wish to convey, but they can't tell when someone is rolling their eyes, making a face, pointing to a far-away object, actively engaged in listening or even whether the person they are talking to is still there!



*A camper climbs the rock wall.*

We help our kids listen for subtle clues in people's voices that indicate their reactions and thoughts, even if they are not verbalized, and use their other senses to "make sense" of non-verbal communication.

At our camps, we also focus on learning to give to others. Way too often, sighted persons (parents, relatives, teachers, and others) in a child's life sometimes send conscious or unconscious messages that they "CAN'T" perform certain tasks due to their visual impairment. Our kids are surrounded by people that "give" to them. Yet it is human nature that we want to



be givers, too, and not just takers. We have service projects, random acts of kindness, and other ways to help our campers incorporate giving to others into their daily lives.



*Campers practice chopping vegetables with a knife.*

bake French toast and pizza, make egg rolls, have nacho night, make a mean meatloaf, and of course learn to make campfire desserts!

OUB's one-on-one instructional approach does amazing things; last year, one young man was scared of getting too close to boiling water for pasta, but with help and a special technique he got it into the pot without hurting himself. Others have learned to make coleslaw,

Additionally, we have one of the few facilities in the country where real cooking skills can be taught to children who are blind or have low vision. Usually teachers don't have kitchens available to them or the time to teach cooking skills, and parents don't know how to teach their child who is blind or has low vision how to use a sharp knife safely or get something hot out of the oven. Cooking for yourself is one of the first steps to independence, but it should go beyond heating up frozen dinners in the microwave. At OUB

Camps, we roast whole chickens,



chop vegetables and meat, or pick out a good head of broccoli. Sometimes we even do art with vegetables!

For us at OUB Camps, it isn't all that important that a child completely learns new skills at camp. What matters is that our campers know that they CAN learn how to do new things. Some skills are simple and are easily adapted for people who are blind or have low vision. Some skills take more time than others because they are just more complicated. Our results show that every OUB camper learns at least one thing when they come to camp, and they are often more willing to help at home and work on learning new skills. When this happens, we meet our mission to "building life skills, self-confidence and independence for children and young adults who are blind or have low vision."

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*A camper smiles as she picks lettuce.*

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## The Loudest Week of the Year

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**Erica Ihrke,**

COMS Manager of Extended Services,

Leader Dogs for the Blind

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The last week of June is loud at Leader Dogs for the Blind. Well, to clarify, it is loud and fun—and we love it! For 51 weeks of the year, the average age of our clients is 49 years old, so the Summer Experience Camp week when we host 16- and 17-year-olds breathes fresh air throughout our campus.

Summer Experience Camp originated in July of 2007 when three high school students arrived at Leader Dog's campus to learn how to use a Trekker GPS. The five-day program focused on teaching the students, and their teachers who accompanied them, how to use the Trekker GPS to expand their travel environment. By 2009, the program had grown to 11 campers per summer. So we told the teachers to stay home, and we added a lot of new "fun stuff" to the program (canoeing, fishing, rock wall climbing, tandem biking).



*Two campers and a counselor enjoy some afternoon canoe time after fishing in the morning.*





*Rock wall climbing to the top means you get to take a zipline down!*

The “fun stuff” was added, in part, because the teens learned how to use their Trekker GPS so quickly—in some cases they were teaching the counselors things we hadn’t yet discovered about the system. Spending time with Leader Dogs in training was an added feature suggested by the campers; for some, it was their favorite part of the week.

Though “hanging out” with dogs is fun, the campers actually spend the day with our guide dog mobility instructors (GDMLs) who teach them about the responsibility of having a guide dog and how the dogs can, and cannot, assist with travel. The GDMLs give the teens a chance to “test drive” a Leader Dog to get the feel of how quickly and fluidly travel with a guide dog can be.



*Many of the campers consider “dog day” the best day of camp.*



*Every camper gets the chance to walk with a Leader Dog in training under the guidance of a LDB guide dog mobility instructor.*



An important theme throughout the week is “leadership,” which is enforced during group activities each evening. Using *FISH!* by Stephen C. Lundin, Ph.D., Harry Paul and John Christensen, which promotes leadership through personal accountability, campers learn that they can be leaders whether they are at school, in their community or at work. Because many of the camper’s plan on attending college, this boost of leadership training can truly help them succeed.

Learning how to use GPS to increase their travel independence is still an important part of the program. Campers learn to use their free HumanWare Trekker Breeze+ on a college campus, where navigation is more complicated, and get to show off their newfound knowledge by completing a GPS scavenger hunt.



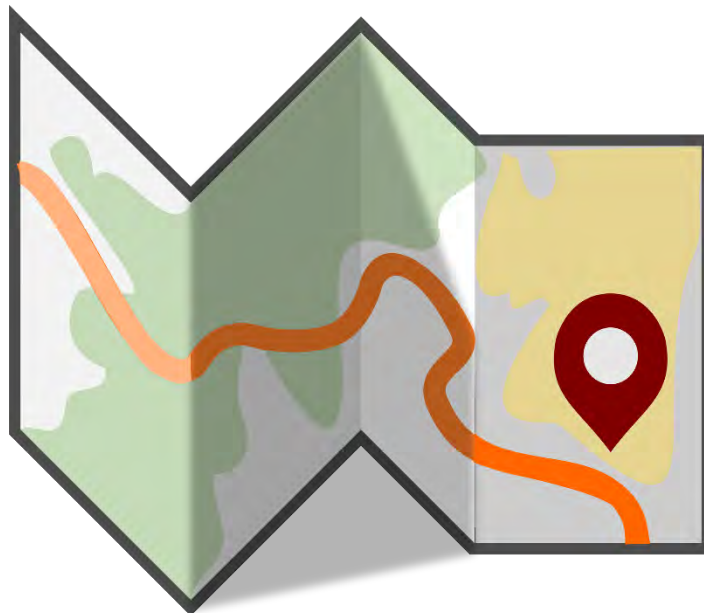
*A day is spent at Lions Bear Lake Camp which includes completing a low ropes Challenge Course as a team.*



In 2015, our Summer Experience Camp was accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC) for applying best practices and delivering services that focus on positive outcomes for our clients and meeting or exceeding industry standards for administration and service provision. Summer Experience Camp is also licensed by the State of Michigan.

With 21 campers from 10 states at our 2017 camp, every camper gets the chance to make new friends, build supportive contacts and learn from others who face the same challenges that they do each day. Because they enjoy the week so much, it is common for our 16-year-old campers to come back when they are 17 and to apply to be a counselor when they are 18. To us, this is the highest compliment we can receive.

Dates for 2018 Summer Experience Camp are June 23–30. The application deadline is March 31, 2018, applications can be downloaded at [leaderdog.org/clients/programs/summer-experience-camp](http://leaderdog.org/clients/programs/summer-experience-camp). For more information, contact Leader Dog's extended services department at 888-777-5332.







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## Summer Academy: Penn State University

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---

As future teachers of the blind and visually impaired, we find it mandatory to continue our education throughout the summer months. The best and most effective way to do this is to acquire a job in the field of vision. The two of us chose to pursue Summer Academy, a summer job that takes place at Penn State University (PSU) in State College, Pennsylvania.

Summer Academy is a college preparation program for students who are blind or visually impaired. The purpose of Summer Academy is to prepare these students for their life after high school. The way that Summer Academy accomplishes this is by having the students take part in a plethora of classes that will give them skills and lessons to take with them into the “real-world”. The classes include assistive technology, vocation training, vision rehabilitation therapy, social work, orientation and mobility, PSU summer session classes, recreation and team building, and low vision classes. This year, 23 high school students completed the 2017 Summer Academy and learned a whole new skill set that they can take with them and use for the rest of their lives.

At Summer Academy, we were hired as resident assistants. In total, there were 30 resident assistants who worked at Summer Academy. Our role was to help the students throughout all activities during the course of the day. We took them to and from their classes,



guided and assisted them throughout Penn State's dining halls, gave them advice on high school issues or college questions, and much more. We also got to experience their college classes first hand and learn an immense amount about the vision field while seeing them in action. Calling Summer Academy a "job" is a complete understatement, however. In three short weeks, Summer Academy became a way of life. For these three weeks, we lived with these 23+ students, 30 other resident assistants, and numerous staff members.


One would anticipate that this experience would be rewarding, but no one can prepare you for the gratifying change that the students and the program can and will have on a person's life. Most students come into the program timid and concerned, but during the month of the program the students shape into incredibly independent individuals. The opportunity to share this experience with the students is priceless. Watching the students of Summer Academy grow and find confidence in their abilities to complete life tasks independently would give anyone the drive to become a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI).


This program is the perfect summer job for someone looking to expand his or her experience in the field of blindness and visual impairments. Summer Academy exposes staff to all the new technology in the vision field, the best Orientation and Mobility practices, valuable visual rehabilitation skills, and many more beneficial techniques to transfer into the classroom. Summer Academy certainly provides future TVIs with many educational benefits including what to expect from students in the classroom and how to approach certain situations. Each day the students are learning therefore, so are we.

Similarly, Summer Academy provides an emotional experience with the students that can provide guidance as to how to approach different students' emotional responses to having a visual impairment. Building relationships with the students at Summer Academy gives a better understanding of what it is like to be a high school student who is blind or visually impaired. As

Resident Assistants we take pride in becoming mentors for the students to help them grow and understand that nothing in this world can stop them from being successful, and they undoubtedly prove that to be true. The students of Summer Academy never cease to amaze each and every person involved in the program.

Summer Academy genuinely changes lives. It changes the lives of the students and it has and continues to change our lives as future TVIs. At the closing ceremony one of the students stood and gave a speech. She concluded with, “The only barrier I have is my own ambition.” This paints a bold and beautiful picture of the characteristics of the students of Summer Academy. The students find confidence and learn that their ability to do something is not limited due to their blindness or visual impairment. Summer Academy builds students up and creates independent adults who are prepared to take on any challenge.


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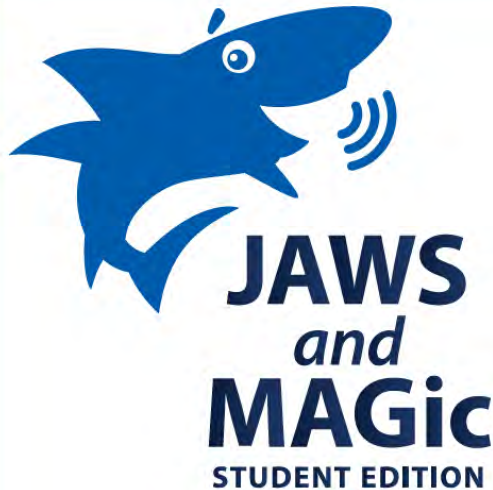


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## **Book Review: *College Bound:***

### ***A guide for students with visual impairments, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition***

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Trief, E. (2016). *College bound: A guide for students with visual impairments* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: AFB Press.

*College Bound*, by Dr. Ellen Trief, is intended as a how-to guide for students with visual impairments to prepare for, select, apply to, navigate, and be successful at college or university. This volume is an action-oriented resource, providing students with numerous suggestions, templates, and checklists intended to support a systematic approach to the entire process. Dr. Trief, who also authored the original tome, is a professor of Blind & Visually Impaired and Severe & Multiple Disabilities at the City University of New York. She was previously an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB)*, and has published many articles and other books on techniques for assisting children with visual impairments.

The considerations outlined for selecting, applying to, and getting into college are germane to all college-bound high school students with the single addition of evaluating the services offered by the various disability resource offices at each school. The author

discusses typical college entrance requirements and suggests a progression of activities VI students should undertake in each semester of high school. For example, students should gain proficiency with various assistive technologies and should apply for testing accommodations when they take the SAT or ACT. Financial considerations and scholarship opportunities are also discussed. Nicole, a visually impaired student going through the college selection process, is introduced and serves as an exemplar throughout the book. Nicole creates a table to chart out her needs and preferences; a blank template of all such resources is provided in the appendices.

Students are repeatedly advised to register and develop a strong relationship with the school's disability office. Students learn that having a disability entitles them both to register for classes early, which allows time to obtain accessible versions of print materials, and to move in on campus early, which provides a chance to orient without the typical throng of students buzzing about. The author stresses the importance of advocating for oneself, and suggests practicing this skill at home and developing alternative solutions to foreseeable problems. The resource most discussed throughout the book is hired readers, who are described as paramount to success. This is a surprising placement of emphasis given the lofted importance of independence. Readers, as the name suggests, will read books and other printed materials aloud as required. Students are advised to employ a handful for readers to ensure availability at the time of need; reading appointments may be scheduled in advanced or requested upon short notice. We learn how to hire and track the time of readers, how to ask them to markup text, and how to utilize them in studying for exams.

Separate chapters are devoted to organization and time management, note-taking skills, study-skills, and research skills. Although these skills are imperative for all students to develop, having a visual impairment requires students to devise alternative methods to be

successful in these areas. For example, completing assignments may take longer, particularly if a reader cancels an appointment. Locating files on a computer can be a major undertaking without a straightforward and logical folder structure. The author suggests specific methods for labeling digital, print, and braille files. A later chapter is devoted to the importance of developing fluent computer skills, including learning keyboard shortcuts, which will greatly improve efficiency. We are also provided with details to consider when selecting a laptop. Of these chapters, perhaps the most valuable information comes in the chapter on research skills. We learn of resources available at the library, including what services librarians can provide. We are also provided with practical tips on how to read and select articles for a research paper and narrow the focus of a research topic.

Although this book provides students with comprehensive lists of skills, tasks, considerations, and equipment options, the book stops short of connecting these resources and characteristics to authentic cases of students employing alternative methods to succeed in their classes. The stories of Nicole, and later of Michael and Carla, are conveyed as impersonal lists of attributes, needs, and actions. There are neither firsthand accounts nor direct quotes from students who have successfully prepared for and navigated college. One particular place such stories and quotes would be most useful is in Chapter 2, when the author declares that students must advocate for themselves by being assertive but not aggressive. This is sound advice that falls flat without examples of what this looks like in real life.

The author did construct cases as a means to illustrate certain processes. For example, Nicole meets her professor for the first time and clearly articulates all of her needs for the class. In response, the professor promptly replies with all of the accommodations he could provide to assist her. It is wonderful if meetings can go that well, but many students are less certain of or less able to articulate their own needs. Moreover, not all professors are as quick to identify potential solutions. Some professors are simply unwilling to adapt their own



behaviors in any way. Thus, it would be a nice addition to read a student's tale of how he or she responded in that situation.

In addition to providing stories from real college students, another way to better show readers what success in school looks like would be to take better advantage of the inclusion of graphics. Images of students with visual impairments, many being images of the same student, are provided throughout the book. These images of students do not enhance the text in any way. Instead, examples of students' notes, folders, and organizational systems would provide a more useful tool for readers. It is true that many of the book's intended readers cannot access those images; however, students with low vision would benefit from a visual representation of the illustrative text that the author does provide.

*College Bound* synthesizes information easily found elsewhere into one convenient resource. Such a resource would most benefit parents, guidance counselors, and teachers who want to know how they can best assist students with visual impairments. While parents, guidance counselors, and teachers may have been considered as a possible secondary audience, this book is written directly to students with visual impairments using imperative language. Teenagers may not respond favorably to being told what they must do. Additionally, suggestions made in the book do not appear to account for the prior knowledge and experiences of students who have made it far enough academically to be heading to college. Chances are good that students in this category have taken notes and used computers before.

Overall, *College Bound: A Guide for Students with Visual Impairments* serves as a useful repository of information to be consulted throughout the college preparatory process. The appendices of templates and additional information will likely prove invaluable to students navigating this process. A copy of this book would do well to exist in guidance counselor offices across the country.

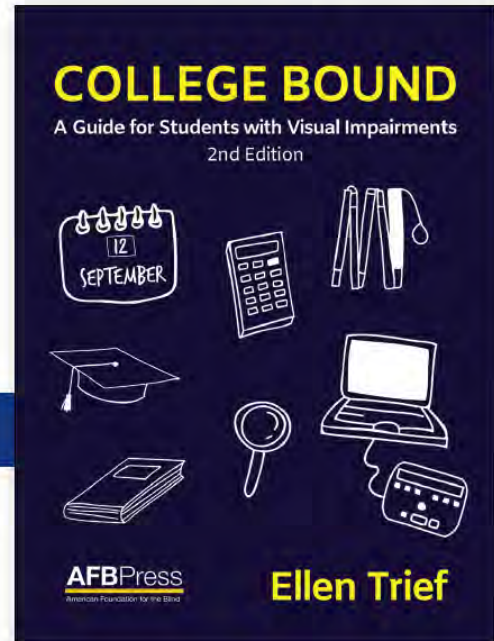
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## Indiana State University – Visual impairment licensure program

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**Robin Thoma,**

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Indiana State University,

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### **Brief History of Indiana State University and the Visual Impairment Licensure Program**

Indiana State University is in the middle of celebrating its Sesquicentennial Era which spans 150 years beginning with the passage of legislation in 1865 to establish Indiana State Normal School through the school's opening in 1870.

Indiana State Normal School, today known as Indiana State University opened its doors on December 20, 1865, as the Normal School for the training of teachers. While no longer just a teacher college, Indiana State University continues the strong legacy of providing a high quality education to future teachers. Throughout its 150 years, Indiana State University (ISU) has added many programs in various areas, but continues to hold true to its roots with the Bayh College of Education located in University Hall in Terre Haute, Indiana.



*Picture of the ISU seal with the school's opening year, 1865.*



The Visual Impairment Licensure Program has been in existence for over fifteen years. The program was initially created because of a shortage of teachers of the visually impaired in the state of Indiana. Since that time the university has helped secure licensure for hundreds of teachers across the state working in both the public school setting and at the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



*Photograph of the Hulman Memorial Student Union at ISU.*

### **Unique Features of the Program**

The Visual Impairment Licensure Program consists of six courses for a total of sixteen credit hours. The program provides the courses needed to gain licensure in Blind/Low Vision

(BLV). In addition to the courses, teachers must pass the Exceptional Needs—Blind or Low Vision exam through the state of Indiana.

The program is delivered through the online learning management system, Blackboard. In addition to the online portion, the program offers face-to-face weekend seminars for each course so that the students and instructors can meet and complete hands-on activities and strengthen the relationships formed in each cohort. The program helps foster a strong support system for each student so they can rely on each other after exiting the program and begin their careers as teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs).

The instructors in the program are both local educators and nationally known experts in the field. These instructors have both a strong foundation in BLV and years of experience working with students with blindness or low vision. ISU is proud to offer only the most highly qualified professors to teach within the program.

The Visual Impairment Licensure Program is partially funded by the Promoting Achievement for Students with Sensory Loss (PASS) Project. The purpose of PASS is to provide statewide support, technical assistance and professional development opportunities for educators that will improve instructional quality, promote academic achievement, and foster successful post-secondary transition outcomes for students with sensory loss. Through their funding the PASS Project provides students with textbooks and lodging to attend the weekend seminars.



*Picture of the ISU logo.*

## Program Size

The Visual Impairment Licensure Program is a two year program and has two cohorts running concurrently. Each cohort has between seven and fifteen students. The smaller class sizes offer individualized attention for each student. Thus, students leave the program prepared to serve students with blindness or low vision. For more information on the Visual Impairment Licensure Program at Indiana State University, please contact Robin Thoma, PASS Project Coordinator at [Robin.Thoma@indstate.edu](mailto:Robin.Thoma@indstate.edu) or (812) 237-8115. You can also visit our website at <https://passprojectisu.org/>

<p>All Children Can Read!</p>	<p>Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Website</p> <p>Shift Your Perspective Find Tools and Strategies Use the Literacy Skill Checklist</p> <p><a href="http://literacy.nationaldb.org">literacy.nationaldb.org</a></p>
	
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Email the editor- Kathleen Farrand  
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**Thank you for your support of CEC!**



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