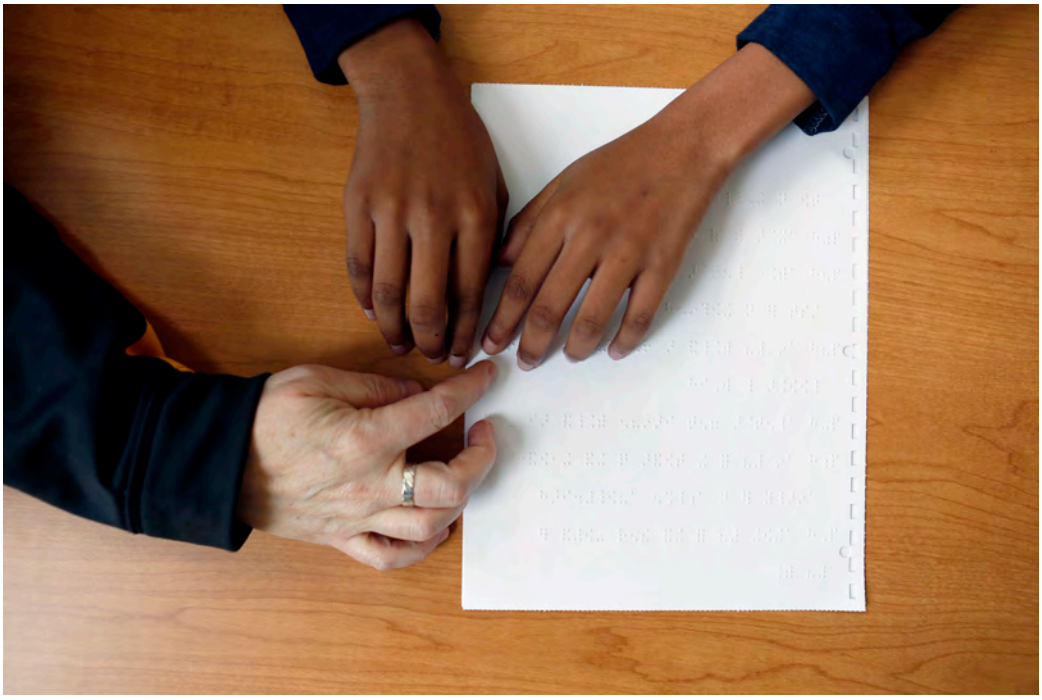
Winter 2025 Pre-Convention Issue



Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Volume 70, Issue 1

The Voice and Vision of Special Education

Council for Exceptional Children
The voice and vision of special education

Cover photo description: The cover photo shows two pairs of hands. One pair of hands is shown reading braille on a piece of paper. The other person's hands are displayed with one of their fingers pointing above the student's hands that are reading.

Photo submitted by: The Maryland School for the Blind

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Table of Contents

Volume 70, Issue 1

Table of Contents

Volume 70, Issue 1

Message from the Editor

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Happy 2025! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. The Winter issue of the *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly* (*VIDBE-Q*) is geared towards preparing for the CEC 2025 Special Education Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, March 12-15th.

The first article is a position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) from 2024. The position paper is by Katie Ericson (doctoral candidate), Dr. Mackenzie Savaiano, Dr. Rona Pogrund, and Dr. Bryan

Moles and discusses the need for workload analysis. The second article is by Dr. Rona Pogrund and provides information about her session at the upcoming DVIDB pre-conference on managing your workload for teachers of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility specialists.

The next two articles focus on different programs in the region of our upcoming CEC 2025 Convention. Read about the history and continued impact of the Maryland School for Blind. Then, read about the Virginia Consortium that is preparing teachers of students with visual impairments at George Mason University, Old Dominion University, and Radford University.

The final four articles highlight the DVIDB award winners that will be celebrated at the CEC 2025 Convention. Congratulations to Katie Armstrong, the Deborah D. Hatton Outstanding Dissertation of the Year Award winner! Congratulations to the Teacher of the Year Award winner, Kathleen Redican! Congratulations to Tristan Pierce, Exemplary Advocate Award Winner! Congratulations to Lauren Lieberman, the Distinguished Service Award Winner! Read about the amazing work that each of our award winners has done and continues to do to support those with low vision and blindness.

I look forward to seeing you in Baltimore, Maryland, March 12-15th. If you are presenting at the CEC 2025 Convention, please consider submitting an article about your presentation for the Spring 2025 Convention issue. Email me

(Kathleen.Farrand@asu.edu) for more information. Best wishes for an extraordinary 2025!

President's Message

Adam Graves,

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This issue of *VIDBE-Q* comes at one of the busiest times of year for us as we prepare for the annual CEC Convention and Expo in Baltimore. As we look forward to the excitement of that event, I hope that you take some time to read through the articles in the Winter 2025 pre-convention issue.

If you can't make it out to Baltimore for the CEC convention, we encourage you to register for our pre-conference. This year we are so happy to feature Dr. Rona Pogrund and Dr. Beth Foster, two highly respected professionals who will be

sharing information on topics that often pose difficult questions and decisions to us as TSVI's: workload management and providing developmentally appropriate movement activities for our students who are blind and deafblind with multiple disabilities. In addition, the pre-conference will once again provide all of us with updates from the APH Connect Center.

The DVIDB board is pleased to welcome three new members and one returning member this year. Christina Harrison will be serving as our Representative Assembly member in 2025. In addition, Jodi Dowell will be joining the board as a new director and Saurym Quezada will be taking on the role as our Student Ambassador this year. Finally, we are also pleased to welcome Dr. Nicole Johnson back to serve as a director on the DVIDB Board. Please make sure to welcome these new and returning board members as you encounter them either in-person or via virtual events.

I would also like to use this address recognize our 2025 award winners. This year's award winners are as follows:

Tristan Pierce - Exemplary Advocate

Dr. Katie Armstrong - Dissertation of the Year

Dr. Lauren Lieberman - Distinguished Service

Kathleen Redican - Teacher of the Year

I know that for many of you who are active in our organization these names will be familiar to you. Please feel free to reach out to them to offer your congratulations on all their hard work and dedication to our field. We would love to see those of you who are going to be attending the CEC Convention in Baltimore at our social and awards ceremony where we will recognize all our award winners.

As the first year of my term as DVIDB president ends and I look toward the beginning of my second year, I am filled with gratitude for all of you, the members of DVIDB for your continued support of our organization. As I have mentioned in previous editions of this address, our numbers may be small, but our voices are mighty. I look forward to continuing to hear our mighty voices resonate in Baltimore and all throughout CEC in 2025.

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The Need for Workload Analysis for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility Specialists

A Position Paper of the Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Council for Exceptional Children

2024

Katie Ericson, Mackenzie Savaiano, Rona Pogrund, and Bryan Moles

Purpose

This position paper informs relevant partners about the unique roles of itinerant teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) and orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists related to the requirements and expectations of their positions beyond providing direct service to students. This paper will define workload and explain how it is different from caseload and provides recommendations regarding workload analysis, rather than caseload analysis, for these educators.

Background and Problem

When considering staffing, allocation of students on individualized education programs (IEPs) or young children and families on individualized family service plans (IFSPs), and service provision, administrators often adopt a caseload model. In this model, administrators simply divide the number of students with visual impairments by the number of available TSVIs and O&M specialists (Meador, 2015). Importantly, such a model considers the number of students who require special education services without regard to the amount of time needed to meet those students' needs or teachers' other responsibilities (American Occupational Therapy Association, American Physical Therapy Association, & American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014; Wilton, 2017). However, in recent years, researchers and professional organizations have encouraged administrators to adopt a workload model. Workload refers to all activities and responsibilities performed by TSVIs and O&M specialists, including, but not limited to, lesson planning, preparing unique curricular materials, adapting classroom-based materials, conducting evaluations, attending meetings, traveling between educational sites, and direct and collaborative consultation service provision (Pogrund & Cabrera-Garcia, 2023; Pogrund et al., submitted 2023; Wilton, 2017).

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires student placement based on need rather than convenience, the law does not offer guidance regarding the size of a teacher's caseload or the total time of their workload (Wilton, 2017). Similarly, few states provide legal guidance for caseloads or have specific policies regarding caseload (Hogue & Taylor, 2020; Zebehazy et al., 2023). Notably, only four states offer specific guidance regarding caseloads for vision professionals (Hogue & Taylor, 2020; Zebehazy et al., 2023). These states are Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Their guidance moves beyond a caseload model, considering instead how service delivery/educational setting and/or student need (e.g., multiple disabilities) impact the number of students on an educator's caseload.

However, appropriate service provision and staffing require some knowledge of students with visual impairments to implement state guidance appropriately. Instead, the responsibility for assigning caseloads often falls to district and/or school administrators, who may have limited experience working with students with visual impairments (Wilton, 2017; Zebehazy et al., 2023). As there is an ongoing shortage of both TSVIs and O&M specialists, administrators often assign students to TSVIs and/or O&M specialists using a caseload rather than a workload model (Meador, 2015; Wilton, 2017).

Problem with Caseload Model

Most research has considered TSVI's and O&M specialists' caseloads. In research studies conducted over the past 20 years, TSVIs and O&M specialists have consistently reported caseloads ranging from 1-100 students, with a mean of approximately 20 students (Hebert & Savaiano, 2021; Meador, 2015; Zebehazy et al., 2023). In Zebehazy et al.'s. (2023) study, itinerant TSVIs and O&M specialists again reported caseloads of 20-300 students. However, approximately 14% of vision professionals reported caseloads of 30-200 students. Accordingly, many TSVIs and O&M specialists report large, unmanageable caseloads, as well as concerns about the resulting quality of service students receive (Meador, 2015; Wall Emerson & Anderson, 2014; Zebehazy et al., 2023).

Research indicates that as the number of students on a teacher's caseload increases, teaching quality declines (Bettini et al., 2017; Wall Emerson & Anderson, 2014; Wilton, 2017). In particular, as caseloads increase, use of individualized instruction and accommodations for students with visual impairments decline (Wilton, 2017). Large caseloads contribute to teacher stress and may eventually lead to burnout, impacting a teacher's physical and mental health, and ultimately lead to attrition (Bettini et al., 2017; Hogue & Taylor, 2020; Texas Action Committee for the Education of Students with Visual Impairments, 2020; Wilton, 2017). The RAND Corporation (Doan et al., 2023), in its *State of the American Teacher Survey*, found that teachers are twice as likely as other workers

to experience work-related stress. In a field like visual impairment, where a shortage already exists, making sure these professionals do not leave the field due to burnout is crucial. Researchers have noted a significant negative relationship between special educator burnout and student individualized education program (IEP) quality, teacher adherence to interventions and accommodations, and student achievement of IEP goals (Bettini et al., 2017; Hogue & Taylor, 2020). As teachers experience greater levels of stress, they are less able to meet their students' needs; their students are then less likely to meet and/or exceed their annual IEP goals. Other researchers have noted a link between teacher burnout and poor student behavior and engagement (Hogue & Taylor, 2020).

TSVIs, O&M specialists, and the students they serve also experience the effects of unmanageable caseloads. As TSVIs and O&M specialists serve larger numbers of students, they shift from direct instruction to consultation (Wilton, 2017). Thus, students may receive less direct instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum and/or their instruction may be less effective (Wilton, 2017; Zebehazy et al., 2023). Similarly, TSVIs and O&M specialists with large caseloads have reported adverse effects on students' curriculum access and achievement, as they have less time to individualize students' education and provide appropriate accommodations (Wilton, 2017).

Benefits of Considering Workload

Few researchers have considered TSVI and O&M specialists' workloads. The *Visual Impairment Scale of Staffing Pattern Analysis (VISSPA)*, developed by the Workload Analysis Subcommittee of the Texas Action Committee on Education of Students with Visual Impairments, is the first tool focused solely on the workload of itinerant vision professionals (Pogrund et al., submitted 2023). TSVIs and O&M specialists spend approximately 19 hours per week on professional responsibilities other than direct services to students, including travel between educational sites (Griffin-Shirley et al., 2004; Zebehazy et al., 2023). Surveys show that itinerant educators could be spending, on average, 5-7 hours per week traveling between schools to provide services to children (Griffin-Shirley et al., 2004; Hebert & Savaiano, 2021; Meador, 2015). Travel time varied greatly among itinerant TSVIs and O&M specialists based on geographic locale, with itinerants in rural areas spending more time per week traveling compared to their urban counterparts (Hebert & Savaiano, 2021; Meador, 2015).

Travel time is only one aspect of an itinerant TSVI or O&M specialists' workload that should be considered. Initial research suggests that considering an itinerant educator's entire workload (i.e., travel, materials preparation, meetings) could alleviate some of the negative outcomes of large caseloads (AOTA, APTA, ASHA, 2014; Pogrund et al., submitted 2023). In particular, use of a workload model increased opportunities for collaboration with other teachers and related

service providers, allowing itinerant educators to feel more supported (AOTA, APTA, ASHA, 2014).

Recommendations

To ensure that students with visual impairments receive a free, appropriate public education, TSVIs and O&M specialists must engage in regular workload analysis with their administrator(s). The number of students served by each TSVI and/or O&M specialist may vary based on the workload analysis results. An effective workload analysis should address the following.

- Ensuring a manageable, equitable workload begins by accurately determining student needs using a caseload analysis (Sapp et al., 2013; Toelle & Blankenship, 2008). TSVIs and O&M specialists should use the student's most recent evaluation results to determine student strengths, needs, and service times. This information should be explicitly reflected in the student's IFSP or IEP.
- When calculating student service time, TSVIs and O&M specialists should consider their full scope of practice (e.g., direct instruction, collaborative consultation, preparation, etc). TSVIs and O&M specialists should use objective tools with evidence of reliability and validity based on student need (i.e., *Visual Impairment Scale of Service Intensity of Texas (VISSIT)* (Pogrund et al., 2019) and *O&M VISSIT* (Pogrund et al., in press), *Vision*

Services Severity Rating Scales (VSSRS)) to determine student service times as needed.

- TSVIs and O&M specialists, working with administrators and related service providers, should use a workload analysis model when planning service provision and staffing. A workload analysis model considers the full range of educators' duties, unlike a caseload model which just considers how many students they serve.
- TSVIs and O&M specialists should document time spent working, especially if they are currently unable to meet student needs due to their workload (Zebehazy et al., 2023). TSVIs and O&M specialists should also consider collecting additional, supporting data (e.g., progress monitoring data, intervention fidelity data, teacher surveys, etc.). Such documentation should then be shared with administration to advocate for more equitable workloads. Use of a validated workload analysis tool that considers all aspects of a vision professional's job is important to document time spent on direct and consultative services as well as the additional tasks required by these itinerant positions.
- Workload analysis should be conducted with team members and with administrators at least annually, and administrators should review staffing regularly to ensure manageable workloads.

Position

It is the position of the CEC-DVIDB that services provided to students with visual impairments must be based on individual student need rather than the number of available TSVIs and O&M specialists. When determining student services and staffing, administrators, in conjunction with TSVIs and O&M specialists, should conduct a workload analysis to account for all professional activities performed by special educators. Finally, further empirical research is needed to determine appropriate workloads for TSVIs and O&M specialists and the impact of TSVI and O&M specialist workloads on student outcomes.

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Submit an Article in 2025

2025 Submission Dates

Summer
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July 18th

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April 11th

Email the
editor for more information-
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Preventing Burnout by Clarifying and Quantifying the Workload of Itinerant Vision Professionals

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CEC-DVIDB Preconference-February 28, 2025

Target Audience: Itinerant TSVIs and O&M specialists

The objectives of this presentation will include:

1. Attendees will learn about the history and purpose of the new workload analysis tool, the *Visual Impairment Scale of Staffing Pattern Analysis* (*VISSPA),* for accounting for other tasks that itinerant TSVIs and O&M specialists do in addition to direct and collaborative consultation services.
2. Attendees will learn about the development of the new scale, the *VISSPA*, and how it can be used by itinerant vision professionals.

3. Attendees will have a demonstration of how the *VISSPA* works with a case study of a vison professional's workload and will learn about the results of the two validation studies that have been conducted on the tool.

This Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) Pre-Conference presentation will focus on an ongoing dilemma that many vision professionals in our education field face on a daily basis: managing their workload. The *Visual Impairment Scale of Staffing Pattern Analysis* (*VISSPA*) is a new validated tool for itinerant teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) and orientation & mobility (O&M) specialists to use to analyze their workload with quantitative data.

The *VISSPA* was developed and validated over the past 6 years by a team on the Workload Analysis Subcommittee of the Texas Action Committee on Education of Students with Visual Impairments, a stakeholder group dedicated to addressing key issues in the field impacting students and professionals and that is endorsed by the state education agency.

Two research studies have supported the validation and reliability of this tool in analyzing the workload of these vision professionals. Understanding that "caseload" and "workload" are two different measures is important. Caseload refers to the number of students being served and the time spent in direct

instruction and collaborative consultation for all students being served by a TSVI or O&M specialist. Workload is all the tasks that require time of these vision professionals in a week, including time spent on direct and collaborative consultation services, but it also accounts for things such as material preparation, lesson planning, IEPs, travel, etc. See the CEC-DVIDB position paper by Ericson et al. (2024) on workload analysis for vision professionals.

This presentation will provide the history of the *VISSPA* to be used in conjunction with the service intensity tools, the *VISSIT* and *O&M VISSIT*, to provide a clearer picture of what these vision professionals are doing during their work week so that resources and personnel can be reallocated, if needed, to ultimately provide better services to students who are blind or visually impaired. In a special education field with ongoing shortages nationally, burnout is a risk for these vision professionals. Helping them, their team, and their supervisor understand how they spend their time in this itinerant position each week is an important step to identifying the need for a shifting of duties and resources, or in some cases, adding additional personnel, so that there is time to provide the services to students with visual impairments to meet their individual needs.

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The Maryland School for the Blind: A Legacy of Empowerment and Innovation

Jeff Sanchez

The Maryland School for the Blind

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For over 170 years, the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) has been more than just a school. Established in **1853**, MSB has been a place of belonging, growth, and opportunity for students who are blind or have low vision. Nestled on 96 acres in Northeast Baltimore, MSB's campus offers a safe and inclusive environment where students can learn, play, and build relationships that last a lifetime.

Building a Legacy

The journey of MSB is a story of resilience and innovation. In **1853**, MSB opened its doors as the Maryland Institution for the Education of the Blind, supported by both private and state funds. A few years later, Frederick Douglas Morrison began his four-decade tenure as Superintendent shaping the school with his vision and dedication. Morrison's leadership paved the way for a more formalized approach to blind education, a mission he took beyond MSB when he

co-founded the American Association of Workers for the Blind in **1887** (Maryland Archives, 2023).

By the time MSB moved to its current location in **1907**, under Superintendent John Francis Bledsoe, the school was already recognized as a model of progressive education for blind students. Bledsoe's efforts led to the construction of Newcomer Hall and the creation of the first "cottage system" for instruction, providing students with an environment that felt less like an institution and more like home.

Figure 1

Newcomer Hall

In **1924**, MSB made history by allowing its students to attend mainstream high schools like City College and Eastern High School in Baltimore. This was a revolutionary step, marking MSB as the first institution in the United States to mainstream blind students in such a way (American Foundation for the Blind, 2021).

Embracing Change and Expanding Services

The **1950s** and **1960s** were periods of expansion for MSB, both in terms of facilities and programming. The school began accepting deaf-blind students in **1952**, a move that showcased its commitment to inclusivity (Maryland Archives, 2023). By the **1970s**, MSB expanded services to support students with multiple disabilities, many affected by the rubella epidemic of the 1960s.

In **1974**, new federal legislation mandated education for all children with disabilities, reinforcing MSB's mission to serve students of all abilities. Dr. Richard L. Welsh, Superintendent in the late **1970s**, led the school through a transformative period of facility improvements and new programming, such as the construction of a health center and a therapeutic pool.

Recent Milestones

Over the past decade, MSB has undergone a comprehensive campus transformation to meet the evolving needs of its student body. Today, 96% of MSB students have multiple disabilities, underscoring the importance of accessible

learning environments. To address this, MSB has rebuilt its campus with cutting-edge accessibility features, ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, can fully access and participate in every aspect of the school community.

Figure 2

MSB Lions Pavilion

Supporting Students with Comprehensive Services

MSB isn't just about academics; it's about nurturing the whole student. Every student's journey is unique, and the school's dedicated faculty and staff strive to provide support through each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The range of services MSB offers is vast, including Occupational Therapy,

Physical Therapy, Orientation and Mobility support, Psychological and Social Work Services, and Speech and Language Therapy. In addition, MSB provides assistive technology resources, adaptive physical education, and transition services to ensure that students are well-prepared for life beyond MSB.

The career education program, for instance, allows students to develop practical job skills by running The Russo Café, managing a clothes boutique, and working in the school store. Through these real-life experiences, students learn about food preparation, customer service, and money management—skills that will serve them well as they enter adulthood.

Orientation and Mobility: A Path to Independence

Safe travel is essential for independence, and MSB ensures students develop the skills to navigate their environments confidently and safely. MSB's Orientation and Mobility specialists teach students between the ages of 3 and 21 to travel safely—on campus, in the community, in their homes, at job sites, and wherever they wish to go. Several pioneers in the field of Orientation and Mobility (O&M), including Richard E. Hoover, played a pivotal role in developing MSB's program. Widely regarded as the father of modern O&M, Dr. Hoover began his educational career at MSB as a Physical Education teacher. After serving in the military, he returned to MSB and collaborated with colleagues at Johns Hopkins University to develop groundbreaking long white cane techniques, including the side-to-side

sweeping method. These innovations revolutionized mobility training by transforming the white cane into an essential tool for independent navigation, cementing MSB's status as a leader in blind education.

Figure 3

Orientation & Mobility

Offered as an IEP-related service, O&M is available to MSB students and to students who are blind or have low vision statewide in Maryland's public schools. Lessons are individualized and scheduled to fit students' needs, whether during the day or evening hours.

Through one-on-one instruction, students learn critical skills such as sensory awareness, spatial concepts, human guide techniques, functional use of vision, and public transportation navigation. Specialists also teach long cane travel, fostering confidence and independence. These lessons reflect MSB's broader mission to empower students through comprehensive support tailored to their individual needs.

A Leader in Assistive Technology

One of MSB's most innovative aspects is its use of assistive technology. The school equips students with resources such as iPads, screen readers, Braille note takers, talking calculators and now offers The Monarch. Additionally, MSB utilizes 3D printing technology to create customized learning aids, ensuring that every student has the tools they need to succeed.

Athletics and Recreation for All

Sports and recreation play a crucial role in MSB's curriculum. The school has a state-of-the-art athletic complex, complete with regulation-sized fields, a basketball court, and a running track. Blind and low vision students have the chance to participate in a variety of adapted sports, learning valuable skills in a supportive environment. Whether it's beep baseball, goalball, or track, students at MSB enjoy the opportunity to stay active, build confidence, and experience the joy of competition. MSB leverages physical education not only to engage students but

also to connect with the wider community through innovative and inclusive sports programs.

Figure 4

Goalball

In 2018, MSB demonstrated its commitment to sports and community by setting a Guinness World Record for the Longest Marathon Goalball Game, highlighting the school's role in promoting inclusive athletic opportunities. In 2019, MSB hosted the first-ever competitive blind youth soccer match in the United States, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, adaptive sports, and empowering students through physical activity. Most recently, in the summer of

2024, MSB further expanded its impact by hosting the first East Coast clinic for Blind Cricket, reinforcing its dedication to fostering accessible sports and creating opportunities for students to thrive both on and off the field.

A Mission of Inclusivity and Empowerment

The mission of MSB is clear: to support students who are blind or have low vision on their educational journeys, from birth to age 21. Through personalized services, innovative programs, and a commitment to each student's unique potential, MSB empowers its students to live fulfilling, independent lives. This mission is not just words on a page; it's a guiding principle that shapes every aspect of the school, from its curriculum to its campus facilities (The Maryland School for the Blind, n.d.).

Looking Toward the Future

As MSB moves forward, it remains dedicated to evolving with the needs of its students. Each passing year strengthens MSB's legacy, as it continues to serve as a model of excellence in the education of blind and low vision individuals.

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CONNECTCENTER

Connecting the vision loss community to a world of resources

The APH ConnectCenter offers FREE curated advice and resources to assist children, parents, adults, and job seekers who are blind or low vision, and their associated professionals.

Through the APH ConnectCenter website, you are able to access these ConnectCenter resources, and much more:

- **APH Information & Referral Hotline:** One of our experienced representatives can provide free information on virtually any topic related to visual impairment and blindness. Call toll-free (8ØØ) 232-5463 or e-mail us at connectcenter@aph.org.
- For Families: Find support and resources for families of children who are blind or low vision.
- For Job Seekers & Employers: Find employment information, tools, and guidance for job seekers who are blind or low vision or for employers who work with individuals who are blind or low vision.
- VisionAware: Designed for adults and seniors who are living with vision loss.
- **ConnectCalendar:** For use by the entire blindness field to find and promote events, all in one place. Promote and share your organization's event by adding it to the Calendar or discover upcoming events.
- APH ConnectCenter Transition Hub: Planning for graduation and life after school brings up a lot of questions. Find information about transition programs that emphasize empowerment, career exploration, and work experiences for teens and young adults who are blind or low vision.

APH ConnectCenter • 8ØØ-232-5463 • connectcenter@aph.org

The Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Blindness and Vision Impairment: Program Overview and Structure

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The Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Blindness and Vision Impairment (VI Consortium) is a collaborative personnel preparation program consisting of George Mason University (Mason), Old Dominion University (ODU), and Radford University (RU). Funded by a grant from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the VI Consortium trains teachers to work with students who are blind and visually impaired as teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each of our partner universities recruits, advises, enrolls, and confers degrees for teacher candidates. Mason serves as the primary institution, coordinating grants, awarding sub-

contracts, developing and leading courses, and managing programmatic administrative responsibilities.

Figure 1

VI Consortium Logo

Historical Background

Virginia has a robust history of training TSVIs. Originally, the University of Virginia (UVA) hosted this program and successfully trained many teachers. In the early 2000s, George Mason University was designated as the primary grant recipient and host university as the VI Consortium was established under the leadership of Dr. Michael Behrmann with past coordinators Dr. Kristine Neuber

and Dr. Holly Lawson. Throughout the nearly two decades of personnel preparation with the current model, the VI Consortium has collaborated extensively with multiple Virginia universities, has hosted a doctoral scholar with the National Leadership Consortium in Sensory Disabilities (NLCSD), and offers initial and continuing education opportunities for those in Virginia, the mid-Atlantic region, and beyond.

Faculty

Teacher candidates across Virginia benefit from the collaborative nature of the VI Consortium. Representing regions of Virginia, faculty liaisons at each university provide a vital role in promoting the training and retention of TSVIs. Faculty include Dr. Justin A. Haegele, who is a recognized leader in the field of adapted physical activity, and who has directed a range of programs and scholarly research publications promoting access to physical activity, physical education, health, recreation, and leisure for students with blindness and vision impairment. Katelyn Makovec, a faculty member at ODU, focuses on the development and training of pre-service health and physical education teachers and the licensure programs within that field. Dr. Annemarie Horn is a faculty member at Radford University, and her areas of specialization and research include professional learning and development for pre- and in-service special education teachers, with

an emphasis on technology-enabled coaching and rural special education. Dr. Kimberly Avila, coordinator of the VI Consortium, principal investigator, and professor-in-charge, serves as course lead, primary instructor, manages hiring, accreditation, and conducts administrative tasks for licensure compliance and program performance. Dr. Avila's research focuses on digital accessibility, pedestrian safety, and policy development. The VI Consortium is grateful for adjunct faculty from all over the United States who bring skilled expertise to specialized courses across the program and for program support staff and assistants.

Degree Options, Specialized Courses, and Collaboration

A range of degree options exist to meet the needs of teacher candidates from undergraduate majors and minors, masters, and a graduate certificate for initial and add-on licensure. While Virginia does not have an orientation and mobility program (O&M), the University of Massachusetts Boston (Bozeman, 2024; Bozeman et al., 2018) has included Virginia in multiple cohorts spanning the past decade to train O&M specialists through online and in-person instruction regionally in Virginia. This collaborative endeavor has allowed Virginia service providers to meet the increasing needs of students and adults with blindness and

vision impairment through UMass Boston's dedicated efforts and federal grant funding.

In addition to our program of studies for undergraduate and graduate students, we have designed a specific course focused on brain-based visual impairment that is offered as a supplemental class for identification, assessment, IEP development, and intervention for students with cortical and cerebral visual impairment. This course has drawn a diverse enrollment pool, consisting of current students, alumni, TSVIs, early intervention service providers, and other professionals. This course operates with the support of grant funding from VDOE. Likewise, our expertise is regularly utilized by VDOE, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Legislature, and other state agencies for research, studies, reporting, and consultation on topics related to individuals with blindness and vision impairment, pedestrian and transportation considerations, digital accessibility, literacy, education, transition, and various services.

VI Consortium Funding, Grants, and Admissions

Teacher candidates who reside in Virginia and/or teach for Virginia public schools are eligible for grant funding that covers up to 70% of tuition through each of our partner universities. For those not in Virginia, Mason offers discounted out-of-state tuition, in which many teachers have earned their credentials from various

states. Consistent with findings documented by Schles and Chastain (2023), most of our teacher candidates are educators adding the endorsement to work with students who are blind and visually impaired. Many of these teachers had a student who is blind/visually impaired and were intrigued by best practices to provide instruction, others appreciate the one-on-one nature of working with students, and some were recruited by existing TSVIs that recognized an innovative teacher who would be a good match for this field. As our undergraduate program in special education with a concentration in blindness and vision impairment is less than five years old, we are recruiting more students who seek initial licensure as teachers and plan to begin their professional careers as TSVIs.

Figure 2

VI Consortium TSVI candidates

The VI Consortium and partner universities offer rolling admissions, meaning teacher candidates can apply and begin in fall, spring, or summer. Courses primarily meet via synchronous web-conference in the evenings on a weekly basis for live, interactive instruction. Other modalities include asynchronous and in-person laboratories and instruction. Teacher candidates complete a series of field experiences and internships locally under the guidance of mentoring TSVIs and our University Supervisor.

Conclusion

Utilizing a Consortium model has proven to be an asset for training TSVIs. Each university offers a unique set of opportunities and resources that enhance our ability to meet the diverse needs of teacher candidates and to deliver personnel preparation programming. Our faculty at each university is regionally connected personally to schools, service providers, and administrators, aiding in recruitment and placement for teacher candidates in field experiences. Likewise, equipment distribution is facilitated with regional sites, as is in-person instruction and events with partner campuses around Virginia. The critical shortage of TSVIs continues to be of concern (Ambrose-Zaken & Bozeman, 2010; Savaiano et al., 2022) but continued support from VDOE has allowed Virginia to make efforts in addressing the shortage of TSVIs and foster a presence for advocacy and educational

development among the population of children who are blind and visually impaired.

University Website Resources

- VI Consortium Website
- Mason's College of Education and Human Development
- Old Dominion University Website
- Radford University Website

References

Ambrose-Zaken, G., & Bozeman, L. (2010). Profile of Personnel Preparation Programs in Visual Impairment and Their Faculty. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *104*(3), 148–169. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X1010400304

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Bozeman, L.A., Brusegaard, C., & McCulley, R.M. (2018). Personnel preparation in visual impairment: A responsive, individualized model. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, *112*(1), 112-118.

Savaiano, M. E., Shanahan Bazis, P., Hebert, M., Rodgers, D. B., Bosilevac, M., Leutzinger, B., & Thompson, M. (2022). Estimating the number of teachers of students with visual impairments in the United States. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *116*(5), 724–728. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X221129285

Schles, R. A., & Chastain, M. (2023). Teachers of students with visual impairments: Motivations for entering the field of visual impairment and reflections on pre-service training. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *117*(1), 62–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X221149980

COURSE SEQUENCE

FALL

Braille Code *(3 cr.)*

Medical and Educational Implications of BVI *(3 cr.)*

Assistive Technology for Individuals with Sensory Impairments *(3 cr.)*

Positive Behavior Supports (3 cr.)

SPRING

Curriculum and Assessment for Students with BVI *(3 cr.)*

Braille Reading and Writing *(3 cr.)*

SUMMER

Teaching Methods for Students with VI *(3 cr.)*

Orientation and Mobility for Students with BVI *(2 cr.)*
Consultation and Collaboration (3 cr.)

Characteristics of Students with BVI *(3 cr.)*

INTERNSHIP

Four to twelve credits to be completed by the end of the program depending on university.

Students may begin program during any semester but must take Characteristics of Students with VI during first semester.

FACULTY CONTACTS

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VIRGINIA CONSORTIUM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION IN VISION IMPAIRMENT

VIRGINIA CONSORTIUM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION IN BLINDNESS AND VISION IMPAIRMENT

Preparing teachers to work with students who are blind and visually impaired in Virginia.

WHAT IS THE VI CONSORTIUM?

The VI Consortium is the only academic program for preparing teachers of students with visual impairments in Virginia and is comprised of three universities: George Mason University, Old Dominion University, and Radford University. Its primary goal is to prepare teachers to be highly skilled at working with students with visual impairment and blindness. Completion of the VI program meets the Virginia Department of Education's required competencies for teachers of students with blindness and vision impairment.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The VI Consortium trains teacher candidates through multiple modalities to enhance curriculum and instruction. This includes online, synchronous courses offered through web-conference, asynchronous sessions, hybrid classes, and face-to-face learning environments. The VI Consortium offers a partial tuition grant for qualified Virginia residents and educators.

MORE INFORMATION?

For detailed information about the program, visit the VI Consortium website at: http://kihd.gmu.edu/vi

Deborah D. Hatton Outstanding Dissertation of the Year Award: Katie Armstrong

Nominated by Sandra Lewis & Sarup Mathur

Dr. Katie Armstrong is passionate about working directly with students and their families. She taught preschool at the Foundation for Blind Children for thirteen years. She also served as the assistant director of the preschool and k-4 program for students with visual impairments. She then transferred to ACCEL, a private placement option for students with developmental disabilities. At ACCEL she was a full-time teacher of students with visual impairments for four years. ACCEL supported her dissertation process, providing full backing for her research study. More recently, she also secured a contract with the ACCEL program located in Saudi Arabia. As an independent contractor, she provides virtual support to the staff working with students who have visual impairments on their campus. Now, she is running her own company, providing direct and consultative services to students with visual impairments, adults who support them, and agencies that provide services to them.

Her dissertation employed a mixed-method approach to research and incorporated a multiple baseline design across subjects. She worked with three dyads of paraprofessionals and students to examine the effectiveness of a social skills program on paraprofessionals' use of the hand- under-hand strategy. This study is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a critical gap in the literature regarding effective instructional strategies for students with visual impairments, who often face unique challenges in social interaction and engagement. By focusing on the role of paraprofessionals in facilitating social skills development, Dr. Armstrong's research underscores the importance of training and empowering these key educators to implement effective techniques that enhance learning experiences. Additionally, the findings from her study have the potential to inform best practices and policy decisions in special education, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for students with visual impairments. The emphasis on a collaborative approach between teachers, paraprofessionals and students not only fosters a supportive learning environment but also promotes the social integration and

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Congratulations, Dr. Katie Armstrong, DVIDB’s Dissertation of the Year Award Winner!

Allied Instructional Services™

November 5th – November 8th, 2025
Huntsville, AL

Getting In Touch with Literacy 2025
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals related to all areas of literacy for individuals with visual impairments are now being accepted for presentations at the **Sixteenth Biennial Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference**. Hosted by Allied Instructional Services and Council for Exceptional Children Division on Visual Impairment & Deafblindness. Proposals that focus on the development and use of literacy skills at all ages, ability levels, and in all media, will be considered for acceptance at this premiere topical conference.

In order to give as many presenters as possible the opportunity to present at this final conference, proposals must be limited to a total of two sessions and one poster session per person. This includes presentations as either lead presenter or as a co-presenter.

The Getting in Touch with Literacy conference is a conference that includes underlying respect for literacy at all ages and ability levels. Presentations are encouraged on topics related to infants and toddlers, school aged students, and adults. Professionals addressing literacy skills in rehabilitation settings are encouraged to submit proposals.

To submit your proposal use the link:
https://cec1785.wufoo.com/forms/rus1w5b0vhqxqd/

Below are what is required by each proposal. All proposals need to be submitted no later than January 31st. Program decisions will be finalized by the beginning of March and decisions will be communicated to submitters. For questions, please contact Dr. Nicole Johnson at njohnson@kutztown.edu

NOTE: ALL PRESENTERS MUST REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE. PRESENTERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN TRAVEL AND ACCOMODATIONS.

Name of Lead Presenter:
Affiliation:
Email:
Co-presenters' Names, Titles, Emails and Affiliation (if applicable):
NOTE: *All presenters must be listed here to be included in the conference program. Write names, titles, and affiliations exactly as you want them to appear in the program.*

Title of Presentation (as it should appear in the Conference Program):
Brief program description (as it should appear in the program and pre-conference advertisements - Limit of 50 words):

Type of presentation (all presentations are scheduled for 1 hour):

- ☐ Concurrent Session
  - ☐ Panel
  - ☐ Workshop (interactive)
  - ☐ Poster
  - ☐ Roundtable

Please provide a one-page description of your proposed presentation. Information shared might include the following:

- Overall purpose and relevance to literacy (limit to 300 words or less)
- Type of information being shared (i.e. research, practice oriented, medical).
- Targeted age group (early childhood, elementary, high school, adult, etc.) and population to which information best applies (students/adults with low vision, gifted students, struggling braille readers, students with multiple disabilities, etc.)
- Target audience (teachers of students with visual impairments, rehabilitation teachers, low vision therapists, transcribers, parents, students, or others

AV Equipment

All rooms will be equipped with the following equipment:

- Speaker's table
- LCD projector
- Screen
- Speaker's podium

If you need the following items, please come prepared with your own equipment:

- Laptop computer
- External speakers
- Adaptors for your equipment

If you have additional AV needs, please specify your needs below. Please note that not all AV equipment requested will be available and there may be an additional charge to the presenter for unique requests, including wifi access.

Participants should have access to a table to prepare file folders with CVI activities.

All speakers must register for the conference and secure their own travel and hotel accommodations. Please check the conference website at www.gitwl.org or scan the QR Code for information regarding registration and hotel reservations.

Teacher of the Year Award: Kathleen Redican

Nominated by Zoe Tseng and Katie Tseng

Kathleen Redican demonstrates how teachers of students with visual impairments can make a profound positive impact on the lives of their students and their students' families. Some of the words used to describe her are dedicated, kind, compassionate, patient, genuine, and special. Mrs. Redican supports her students and teaches them how to use multiple digital tools and to advocate for their own needs. She even has supported a student with preparing a presentation for their classmates to tell them about their digital condition and show off the digital tools that they use. She also supports students with developing a positive self-image and self-advocacy skills.

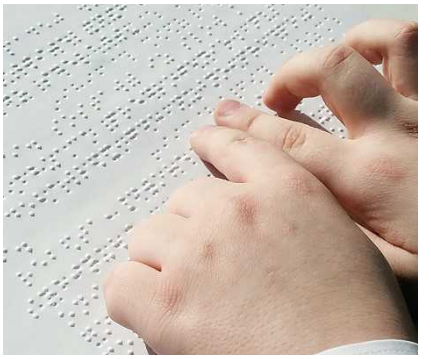
Mrs. Redican sees the whole person with each student that she works with and supports them with developing technical skills for academics, and the personal fortitude to face the world in a positive way. In addition, she is a skilled liaison between students and their teachers. She finds ways for teachers to helps students access materials in different classes. She makes sure students are prepared with practical skills, such as cooking, cleaning, organizing, and styling

hair so her students gain confidence and independence. Mrs. Redican works to support her students, so they are prepared to do well in pursuing their plans after school, such as college.

Congratulations, Kathleen Redican, DVIDB's Teacher of the Year Award Winner!

VIDBE-Q Summer Issue

Submit your article today!



Submissions Due:

July 18, 2025

Back to School Issue

Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Email your manuscripts to Kathleen Farrand, editor

Kathleen.Farrand@asu.edu

Exemplary Advocate Award: Tristan Pierce

Nominated by Katie Ericson

Tristan Pierce is a multiple disabilities/physical education project leader at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). At APH she has channeled her commitment to accessibility into tangible products that individuals with visual impairments, their families, and their teachers use in everyday life.

Tristan regularly attends Camp Abilities to connect with student athletes, using that information and feedback from them to design adapted sports equipment. This is because Tristan's passion lies in accessible, adapted physical activity for individuals with visual impairments. In her role at APH, she has worked to develop products that provide access to sport and leisure activities. She continues to be a vocal advocate for the development of blind tennis in the United States, providing hands-on experiences at this summer's AER International Conference.

However, she has also helped develop APH products that provide access to the Expanded Core Curriculum and general education curriculum for students with additional disabilities. Tristan has shared her work with the larger vision community at both local and international conferences, such as the biannual

AERBVI International Conference, and online. She truly values the voices of those from the field, working closely with teachers and families. In addition to her work with APH and Camp Abilities, she has served as a (former) adapted swim coach, a mentor to adults with disabilities, and secretary for AERBVI's Division on Physical Activity and Recreation. Tristan has been, and continues to be, a strong and vocal advocate for individuals with blindness/low vision and service providers in the field.

Congratulations, Tristan Pierce, DVIDB's Exemplary Advocate Award Winner!

VIDBE-Q 2025 Convention Issue

The intended purpose of the Spring 2025 convention issue is to provide manuscripts aimed at practitioners about presenter contributions to the CEC 2025 program and work related to the field of visual impairments and deafblindness. This issue 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 & title (APA 7th edition)
-References
-APA formatting (7th Edition)
-12 point, Times New Roman or Arial font
-Author information for title: Name, affiliation, highest degree earned, and email address
-Please identify target audience

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

Deadline for submission: April 11, 2025

Distinguished Service Award: Lauren Lieberman

Nominated by Katie Ericson

Dr. Lauren Lieberman is the founder of Camp Abilities. Through her work with Camp Abilities, Dr. Lieberman encourages children and young adults with visual impairments and deafblindness to fully participate in adapted sport and recreation. Through these experiences, these children and young adults also learn about the Expanded Core Curriculum and develop strong leadership skills, which they often apply in every aspect of their lives. From its start in Brockport, Camp Abilities has grown to serve athletes and coaches in almost 20 states and internationally. Students who participate in Camp Abilities often return as leaders, and coaches often become leaders in the adapted physical education and vision fields.

Dr. Lieberman also helps prepare future adapted PE teachers and advocates for individuals with visual impairments in her role as a Distinguished Service Professor in Adapted Physical Education at SUNY Brockport. Her role of professor extends beyond the classroom though. She ensures that her students have experience working and partnering with individuals with visual impairments. She

has a talent for seeing the best in her students (and others) and mentoring them to become leaders in our field. Her enthusiasm for her work is contagious, and she is always ready to collaborate on a new project.

Similarly, Dr. Lieberman has continued to publish peer-reviewed research and present on adapted physical activity for individuals who are visually impaired or deafblind. She has a talent for translating her work into practical tips for those in the classroom. She is always willing to share her knowledge with teachers of students with visual impairments or orientation and mobility specialists, whether it be in-person at the AER conference, CEC conference, or in smaller groups. This desire to share knowledge and grow the field has culminated in her role in creating the International Symposium on Physical Activity and Visual Impairment or Deafblindness. Dr. Lieberman has demonstrated an enduring commitment to the community, and she continues to be strong advocate and educator.

Congratulations, Dr. Lauren Lieberman, DVIDB's Distinguished Service Award Winner!


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