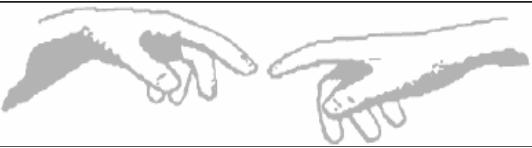# IN TOUCH

The Newsletter of the New England Center Deafblind Project, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472

WARM WINTER GREETINGS!

We want to send along well wishes to our NEC families and colleagues – wishing all of you a happy and healthy new year. We have been busy with numerous activities. Here's a brief list of what we have been up to:

Collaborating Agencies:

www.nhassistivetechnology.org

http://www.sightcenter.com

www.ct.gov/besb/site/default.asp

www.ccmaine.org

www.necdbp.org

www.perkins.org

- Summer Institute July 07: (*"Building Communication Skills Using Systematic Instruction for Learners Who Have Multiple Disabilities, Vision Loss or Deaf-Blindness"*) provided in collaboration with Perkins Training Center. Presenters: Diane Haynes and Jennifer Grisham-Brown, Kentucky Deafblind Project.
- **Deafblind Training Series** in each state
- CVI (Cortical Vision Impairment) **Advisor Training**
- **Family Day** - Apple Picking with MAPVI
- **Discover Conference**, in collaboration with Perkins and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI) and the MA Dept of Education

NEC pumpkins carved at Berlin Orchards Family Day. For more on Family Day see page 15.

- **Transition Conference** 2008 Planning, March 29, 2008 in collaboration with Perkins and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI)
- **Overview of Van Dijk** & "Parent Participation in the IEP Process" Robbie Blaha
- **On-going consultation and trainings** to families and TEAMS in each state

Since we are in the last year of a five-year grant (October 1, 2007 to September 30th, 2008), we are looking to the future and planning for the next grant proposal. Our new grant proposal will target some of the following key issues: increasing family networks and training at the state and regional level; developing a deafblind advisor training model; connecting with lead state agencies and personnel regarding strategies to promote effective transition; improving early identification and referral procedures; increasing state and local capacity to address the needs of children and youth who are deafblind; and, on-going instate trainings regarding deafblindness (i.e., communication, impact of combined vision and hearing loss on learning, assessment and curriculum, literacy).

We appreciate hearing your ideas on how to best meet the needs of children and youth who are deafblind, as well as their families and service providers. So – we ask that you drop us an email at nec@perkins.org or complete the enclosed survey *on page 17* with your comments or suggestions and return it to us ASAP or by Feb 22nd.   We are also asking for letters of support for the next grant, requests for support letters will be mailed out in the next couple of weeks. And again, we look forward to your continued support!

During October 07, we had our Multistate Retreat in Maine, involving personnel from the following states and agencies: Jean Small and Karen Cote (Catholic Charities Maine); Maria Timberlake (Center for Community Inclusion, Maine); Kim Conlon, Cate Weir and Evelyn Kelso (ATECH - New Hampshire); Susan DeCaluwe (New England Center Deafblind Project - Massachusetts); and Karen Olson, Kathy Morgan and Janette Peracchio (Board of Education

We're on the Web!
See us at: www.NECDBP.org

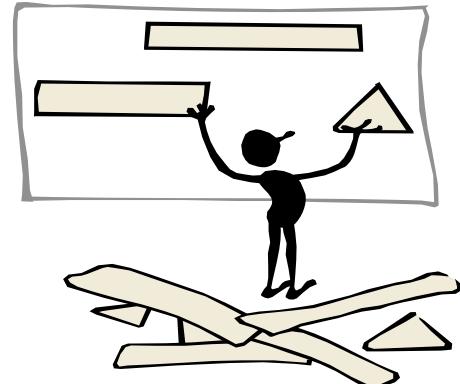## BE SURE YOUR SCHOOL TEAM IS PLANNING FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

By: Janette Peracchio, Family Specialist, BESB

It is back-to-school time and it is time for looking ahead and planning for the school year. If your child is older than 16 and you have a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting scheduled for this fall, you will want to start discussing what will happen when your child leaves high school and enters the adult service arena. Ideally, school teams and parents create programs that make the student as independent as possible. Some students will remain interdependent as they enter adulthood and accommodations should be planned for them. Talk to your child's teacher if a PPT meeting is not scheduled and tell her that you would like to schedule a PPT Meeting to begin working towards a smooth transition for your son or daughter.

The Federal guidelines within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law states that Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Goals must appear in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) no later than age 16. From that point on, until graduation, the ITP goals will determine what skills the student will be working on in class. The activities should take place in a natural, least restrictive environment. **Example:** If there is a goal of cashing a check at a bank, the student needs to work on many skills in the classroom at first, and then at a bank. The bank is the natural environment where check cashing takes place.

Schools are responsible to have the student perform a functional vocational assessment around the age of 16. This can be done within the school setting, or parents can request that an outside agency become involved. This assessment will show the student's aptitude for different types of skills needed for employment. The student's likes and dislikes will also be assessed. People in the Related Services should also be involved at this time, and may be necessary throughout life. These include Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapist, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Intervener, Interpreter, Home Companion, Job Coach, etc.

Parents often get a feeling of dread as they look ahead to their child becoming an adult. Sometimes it is because the school has an "umbrella" of services under one roof, which are provided, as needed and mandated by law. The adult with disabilities must seek out necessary services and there are few mandates that guarantee that their needs will be met. There is wide variation between states, waiting lists for services and greater responsibility is placed on the individual and their family to access resources in their community. There are often bumps along the road to adulthood, but with early planning and a great team in place during high school, a smooth transition can be realized.

The following list may be used as a guide for people in your state to contact for Team Resource Members when planning for a Transition to Adult Services:

- Commission for Deaf and Hearing Impaired
- Dept. of Developmental Services (DMR) (DDS)
- Bureau and Services for the Blind
- Dept. of Mental Health
- Office of Protection and Advocacy
- Dept. of Labor and Employment Services
- Bureau of Rehab Services
- Independent Living Centers
- Private Provider with Experience in DB
- Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)
- Deaf Blind Project
- Housing Authority for Disabled
- Local Human Services Agency
- Dept. Social Services
- Local Transportation Authority
- Faith-based Community members

TEACHERS' DOMAIN: MAKING ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE

The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) and WGBH Interactive, two divisions of Boston public broadcaster WGBH, are collaborating to enable teachers and students to customize presentation of accessible content within WGBH's TEACHERS' DOMAIN. TEACHERS' DOMAIN is a K-12 library of rich-media science resources that support standards-based teaching and learning. Website: www.teachersdomain.org

This project is the first-ever full implementation of IMS accessibility specifications, which were developed by an international working group established by NCAM within the IMS Global Learning Consortium. This effort provides a real-world model of how digital libraries that utilize IMS specifications can automatically respond to individual needs and preferences, paving the way for improved, and easy to use, learning for all students. The Center for Children and Technology at the Educational Development Center is currently evaluating impacts on teacher practice and student learning. For more information, please contact project director Madeleine Rothberg, madeleine_rothberg @wgbh.org.

The work is funded by the National Science Foundation through a two-year grant to NCAM.

NEW SERVICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DEAFBLINDNESS

By Lea Stein, Deafblind Specialist, Perkins School for the Blind

Deafblind specialists are in high demand. They implement educational strategies to address the unique needs of **combined** vision and hearing loss. Deafblind Specialists work directly with students, provide adaptive materials, and consult to classroom staff and teachers about how to best facilitate student success at school, home, and/or in the community.

The Educational Partnerships Program at Perkins School for the Blind is offering a specialized service for students with deafblindness. Lea Stein is a teacher of the deafblind who will deliver service to students in the Northeast region of Massachusetts.

Perkins has received a grant to partially support this service. Students qualify if:

- deafblindness is suspected as infants or toddlers

- deafblind service hours are written into their IEP's and they are between the ages of 3 and 15 years old – or –

- if a family, program, or district would like to set up direct services and/or consultation.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Lea Stein at Perkins School for the Blind by phone 617-972-7396 or by e-mail lea.stein@perkins.org.

WARM WINTER GREETINGS! *-CONTINUED*

and Services for the Blind – Connecticut). We were fortunate to have Ella Taylor from the National Consortium on Deafblindness to facilitate the meeting. After much discussion, the overall consensus was that NEC remain a multistate deafblind project rather than split into single state projects. Our unanimous decision was based on the belief that we can be a stronger presence in the region and share resources and expertise more efficiently, as we work together and collaborate on an on-going basis. We revised our commitment to the multistate model and to improving the skills of children, families, and service providers relative to deafblindness. The Multistate Team agreed that our work with state agencies is paramount in promoting positive change and opportunities for learners who are deafblind. Unless lead state agencies work together to meet the unique needs of children, youth and young adults who are deafblind, services will be fragmented and options for families will be limited. The New England Center Deafblind Project has a renewed level of commitment to sharing resources and expertise to benefit children who are deafblind, their families, and service providers, in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

ACCESSING THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: LITERACY

Martha M. Majors, Assistant Supervisor, Perkins Deafblind Program, Perkins School for the Blind

What Is Literacy?

In the past, literacy used to be considered the "ability to read and write." Today, the definition has gotten broader to include speaking, listening, concepts, and contexts in which all children can learn (Wright, 1997). For students who are deafblind, it is now seen more as a process in which proficiency is not necessarily the final outcome; however, exposure and access to language are seen as the more ideal or meaningful result.

Literacy Is More Than An Open Book

For many people, the word literacy brings up images of someone reading a book from the library, writing a letter or reading the newspaper.

Now think about a student touching a cup that is mounted on the wall at the entrance to the cafeteria to know that he is in the correct place to have his lunch; a child taking a bathing suit from her object calendar to tell her teacher that she wants to go swimming; a young man pointing to a picture of a hamburger in his communication wallet to place his order at McDonalds. These are all examples that literacy is a communication tool that takes many forms.

Children who are sighted and hearing are continually exposed to language and begin developing literacy skills from infancy, long before they are formally taught reading and writing at school. Most preschool age children know that the word on the red, octagonal street sign is STOP or that the sign over the door at the movie theater is EXIT. They are immersed in a literacy rich world that they can easily access.

For a child who is blind or deafblind, literacy skills are limited because of their reduced access to the visual and hearing world. Often, the stories that are read to them can only be heard.   They may know that their parent is turning pages of the book, but may not know that there are printed words on those pages.

Literacy is the understanding that symbols represent objects, events, concepts, people, and ideas. It must be carefully taught to all children, but especially to children who are blind, deafblind or have additional disabilities.

Literacy competency is one of the main goals in all educational settings, beginning in preschool through higher education. Typical students begin to learn literacy skills at a young age by overhearing and observing the adults around them. Students who are deafblind show significant delays in the development of literacy due to limited or poor access to typical literacy materials such as books. This article will highlight the works of a group of teachers in the Deafblind Program at Perkins School for the Blind and their focus on the new definitions of literacy, samples of literacy-based IEP goals that are aligned with the state curriculum, and the functions of literacy.

It All Started With Curriculum Alignment

As a result of the Educational Reform Act in Massachusetts, all schools were presented the challenge of aligning their school-based curriculum with the statewide curriculum known as the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. One of the first and most important curriculums to be developed was English Language Arts. This is deemed the basic foundation for all text based subject areas including but not limited to History and Social Science and Science and Technology/Engineering. Students who are deafblind do not have easy access to this curriculum without significant adaptations and content modifications. The staff in the Deafblind Program at Perkins School for the Blind took on two significant challenges: 1) the task of defining literacy with students who have a combined vision and hearing loss as well as other multiple learning challenges and 2) the task of

aligning curriculum, IEP goals and objectives with the Curriculum Frameworks. The goal was to create access to the English Language Arts Curriculum at the highest, most challenging, and most appropriate level for each student. As part of this process, access to literacy skills were broken down into specific skills that include: matching, sorting, sequencing, and organizational skills. Once the student has begun to learn these basic skills he/she is on the road to learning about literacy in what would seem "unconventional" ways. In fact these skills are from a practical and functional point of view, very effective. These basic skills are the foundation for all of us in everyday life; following directions, following sequences such as getting dressed, doing laundry, following a recipe, and yes, reading. The staff began to focus specifically on writing IEP goals and objectives based on the skills mentioned above and based on literacy/English Language Arts standards taken directly from the Curriculum Frameworks. As a result, every IEP is now a literacy-based IEP.

With the consistent access to the Curriculum Frameworks that is now being practiced, teachers are now accessing more standards from the curriculum in all subject areas. This has "raised the bar" for teachers in using these ideas to create meaningful content that is based on communication, language development, and access to literacy. In addition, these skills are being generalized to other literacy-based subject areas including Science and Technology/Engineering, Mathematics, and History and Social Science. Students now have increased access to information daily and use several modes of literacy specifically adapted for them.

As staff began to align the goals and objectives with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, they also used the content for the Alternate Assessment/Portfolio for their students. There are many examples of goals in the IEP directly related to specific MCAS Alternate Assessment standards.

STUDENT A

Subject Area: English Language Arts
Strand: Reading and Literature
General Standard 8, Understanding a Text: Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text.
Essence(s): identify main event, retell a story, identify what will happen next
Access Skills: Respond to text read aloud, turn pages in a book, orient books right side up
IEP Goal: The student will interact with and use books
Relationship to Literacy: skills of matching words to pictures, sequence a story using pictures, answer simple questions about a story

STUDENT B

Subject Area: English Language Arts
Strand: Language
General Standard 1, Discussion: Student will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
Essence: participate in turn taking activities
Access Skill: Grasp, release, and manipulate objects, take turns as appropriate, apply rules for appropriate classroom behavior
IEP Goal: Using a picture communication system the student will participate in interactions by handing a picture of something she wants to a communication partner and wait for a response.
Relationship to Literacy: this is an early reading skill in that the picture is symbolic and represents an idea

STUDENT C

Subject Area: English Language Arts
Strand: Composition
General Standard 19, Writing: Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
Essence: Use pictures, letters, or words to tell a story
IEP Goal: The student will compose daily journals and letters in their primary mode of communication.

<u>Relationship to Literacy:</u> writing by pasting or drawing pictures, fill-in phrases, sentence starters, organize a letter/appropriate structure

New Ideas and New Definitions of Literacy

Once staff began to review materials in the environment they realized that many of the materials as well as strategies being used were in fact literacy based. For example, the use of a calendar system/schedule system is basically a simple lesson in reading; the calendar system is symbol based (object, picture, MJ, etc.) and basically includes the skills: following a sequence, working from left to right, and matching. These are pre-requisites for reading and as a student learns about the use of a calendar, their literacy skills increase. Another example is following a sequence using MJ symbols to demonstrate hand washing. Since this requires working from left to right in a sequence, it is also considered an early literacy skill.

These examples demonstrate how learning literacy can be defined as "non-conventional" but very effective for students who are deafblind. Students learn the names, the skills, and the concepts while being taught using total communication. So as they begin to "read" a symbol, they also learn the communication, the sign for the symbol. In this way, the student has maximum opportunities to learn how to communicate both receptively and expressively and simultaneously learning how to "read" using a variety of modes.

Resources:
Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities (2006)

Contributing Author: Marianne Riggio

EVERY CHILD IS A POTENTIAL READER

Patricia Weismer, MS. Ed. and Deirdre Leech, M.Ed., Perkins Deafblind Program, Perkins School for the Blind
Photos by: Megan Majors

"*Every Child is a Potential Reader*" is one of our favorite phrases in the Deafblind Program at Perkins School for the Blind. As teachers, we frequently face challenges including all of our students in activities that address traditional curriculum goals. Literacy is one of the subject areas that can be accessed in so many ways during a variety of activities. Literacy is everywhere! We hope to share some of the ways in which we have attempted to adapt conventional materials, offer ideas for creating personal stories with your students, and provide a reminder about the importance of encouraging reading and writing for students who are deafblind.

Children who are born with deafblindness and other multiple disabilities face challenges both early in life and throughout their education. In addition, the lack of early experiences encountered by children who are hospitalized for long periods of time often results in reduced exposure to auditory, visual, and tactile information. Concept development may be delayed due to hearing, visual, and motor impairments, in addition to health and behavioral issues. Therefore, it is understandable that literacy development may take a back seat early on in the life of a child with deafblindness and/or multiple disabilities. The challenges faced by children who are deafblind in the area of Literacy is due to the lack of exposure to reading and writing, access to **appropriate** materials, and sometimes limited expectation that they can read and write at a higher level. In the past, literacy was considered "the ability to read and write." Today, it is viewed more as a process in which proficiency is not necessarily the final outcome; although, exposure and access to language are viewed as the more ideal or meaningful result.
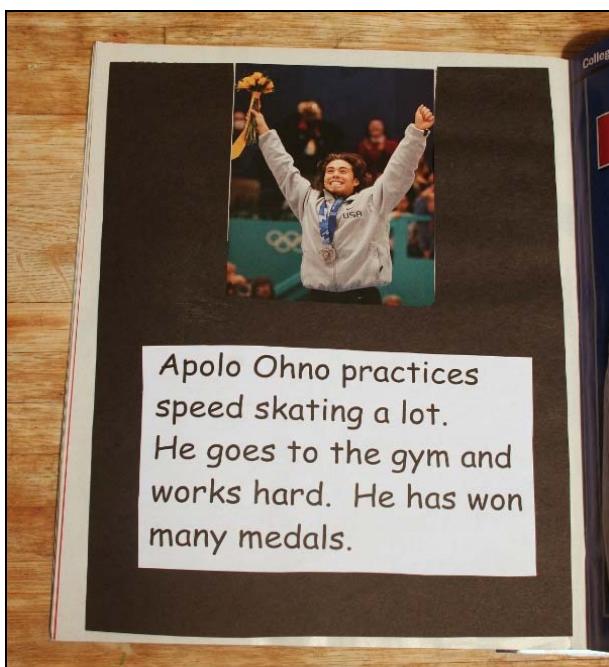
Adapting Reading Materials

Children without disabilities or sensory loss often have access to thousands of highly colorful and motivating books. Children who are deafblind need similar access to as many books as possible. However, it is often

difficult to find a wide variety of books that are as motivating. Also, it may be impossible for some of our students to access these books independently. Even if the book was created for a student with a vision impairment, the book may be impossible to read because of the complex Braille that they are not quite ready to read. Often, the book has no other interesting features. In order to give students who are deafblind the same access as their typical peers, it is often necessary to adapt commercially available books so that they are meaningful and motivating.

When considering the time required to adapt a book, it is important to first consider the purpose of the book and the learning objectives that are attached to reading the book. For example, a book that is intended to be read to the child by a teacher or parent may be adapted differently than a book that is intended to be a part of a child's independent reading and Braille instruction. It may be necessary to adapt a single book several ways depending on the ultimate purpose for the book and the needs of the child. Also, when planning to adapt a book, it is important to have a clear understanding of the child's needs, skills, motivators and learning objectives.

HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR BRINGING THE WORLD OF READING TO THE CHILD WITH DEAFBLINDNESS OR MULTIPLE DISABILITIES:

Apolo Ohno practices speed skating a lot. He goes to the gym and works hard. He has won many medals.

Example 1

This is Apolo Ohno. He is a speed skater for the U.S. Olympic Team.

Example 2

Modifications to the Text:

Make the text accessible by using Braille
- Braille may be difficult/tedious to read for a child.
- Important for exposure to text.

Make the text accessible by using enlarged print and contrast (See Example 1)
- Important to know the child's visual needs for font size and type. There are some fonts that are easier to read than others
- Some books, such as picture books, may have busy backgrounds. Make sure the text has good contrast with the background.

Simplify the content
- This is done when the book is being adapted for the student to learn to read Braille or print and cannot process the level of text.
- Give children exposure to age appropriate reading materials

Supporting print with picture or tactile symbol support (See Example 2)
- Use of picture symbols above the printed text may enhance comprehension

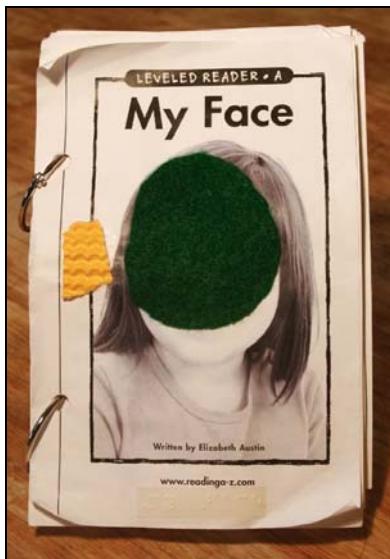**Picture symbols may be color, black/white, large/small**
- For a student with significant vision loss, use tactile symbols (consistent symbols across all books)
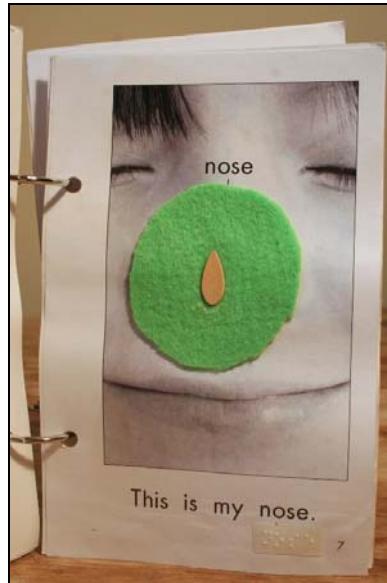- To reduce reading struggles, encourage reading in a group rather than independently
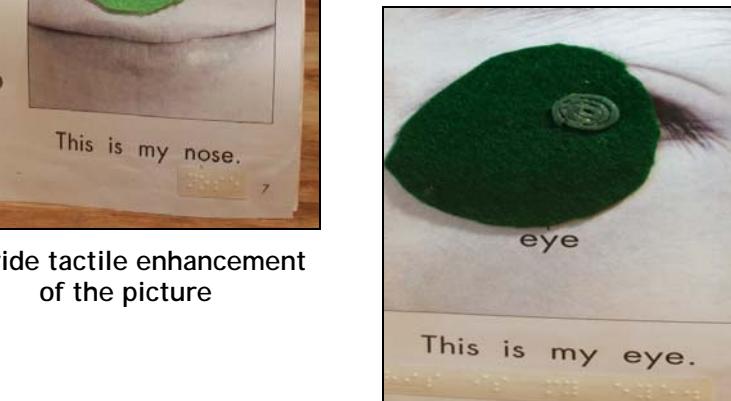
Modifications to the Pictures:

Picture books are the first books that children are exposed to. Yet, children with vision impairments may find it difficult to see any part of the picture. Books for a child who is totally blind may seem boring and the Braille may be overwhelming. To create an exciting book experience, it is necessary to make the content of the pictures accessible.

Highlight the picture with a preferred color so the child's eye is drawn to the picture

Simplify the background
- Take out busy or low contrast background and replace with a solid, high contrast background

Highlight the main idea of the picture
- Picture books often have complex pictures to increase discussion about the book. This may be too difficult visually for some students. Pick the main idea of the picture and remove the rest.

It may be necessary to create multiple pages out of one picture to give full access to the meaning of the picture.

Provide tactile enhancement of the picture

Use an object in place of the picture

Modifications to the Book:

It is necessary to consider physical access to a book, especially for a child where motor skills can be a challenge.   It is important for a child to explore books independently including choosing a favorite, holding the book, turning the page, and even reading a favorite part over and over again. These are common problems for children with visual impairments as well as other physical challenges. It may be necessary to consider other assistive technology options as well.

Make the pages thicker using cardboard
- This makes the pages easier to manipulate and more durable

Add "page fluffers"
- These are simply small squares of foam or cardboard attached to the corner of a page to make them easier to flip without skipping pages

Mount the book on a book stand on a table

Re-bind the book so that the book stays open more easily
- This may be necessary for larger, hard back books that may be very heavy and cumbersome to hold

Use and/or create electronic books
- Using books on tape/CD or even books on the computer using PowerPoint or other specialized software
- These books can be made accessible using a switch so that turning pages and holding the book is no longer an issue
- The child can independently engage with a book and even read their favorite part over and over again

Creating a Literacy Kit:

A literacy kit is a set of activities that are designed to allow a student to actively participate and communicate during book reading activities. The primary purpose is to support and enhance the curriculum with math or reading/writing/language activities to provide the student a multi-sensory experience.

First, a literacy kit starts with a simple story box which includes an accessible copy of the story using the modifications most motivating and appropriate for the child. A story box is also a collection of objects and materials that are related to the story.

There should be objects to represent main characters. These could be stuffed animals, dolls, or paper cut-outs of characters.   Then, any other concepts in the story that can be represented with objects and/or tactile representations should be gathered. If possible, it is good to collect as many real objects as possible so that the child can make real-life connections with the concepts in the story. These items can be used act out the story, explain new concepts, and engage in creative play.

In order to expand on the story box, it is necessary to create a variety of multi-sensory activities that are designed to expand on concepts included in the book. This could include the use of a communication board, switches or other devices so that the child can make comments while reading a story. The literacy kit may also have materials for other types of activities. It gives the professional the opportunity to be creative when developing expanded lessons which may include the use of computer based activities to enhance comprehension. Each literacy kit is individualized based on the developmental level and sensory needs of each student and is most often teacher made.
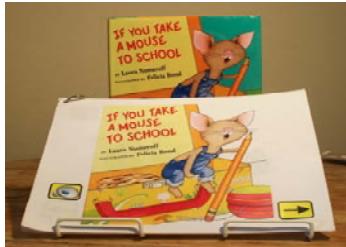
IF YOU TAKE A MOUSE TO SCHOOL

Adapted book with simplified pictures and enlarged text
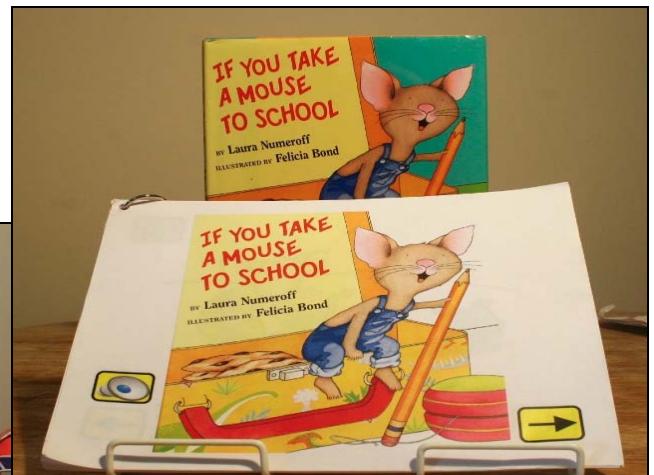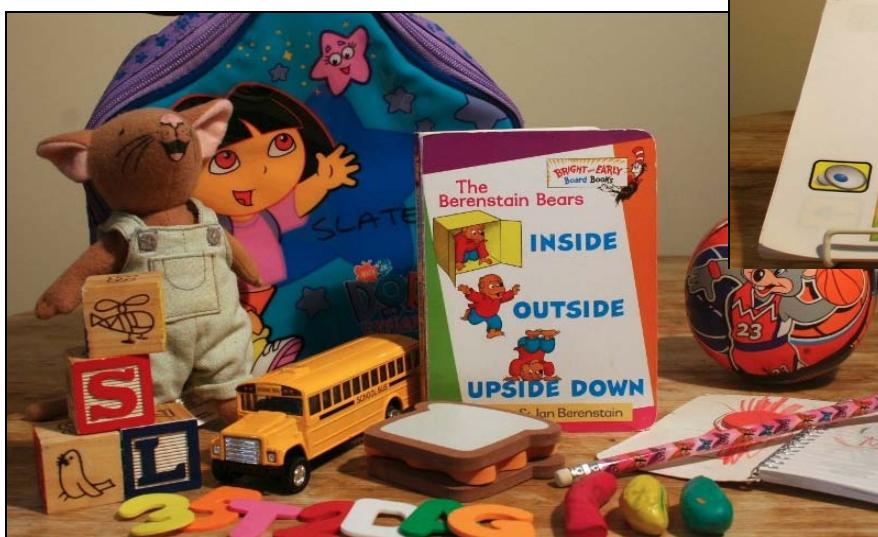
Story objects (shown in picture)

IF YOU TAKE A MOUSE TO SCHOOL

PowerPoint book with same modifications that reads the story in a fun voice with simple animations

ASSESSMENT

Sample Activities

1. In the story, *the mouse builds a house with blocks*. Build a house from blocks together…then count the blocks! Who has more blocks?

2. In the story, *the mouse draws a picture with markers*. Draw your own pictures! Use a paint program on the computer too!

3. In the story, *the mouse has a lunch box*. Pack your own lunch box. What kind of things go in a lunch box?? This is a great sorting activity!

4. In the story, *the mouse writes a story*! Write your own story about school! Use objects, record your story, or use an adapted word processor.

5. Take pictures of things you have that are the same as the story words. He had a basketball….take a picture of your basketball. Then make a vocabulary PowerPoint!

Exposure to books and print is important, but how do we assess what our students are learning as they read? We must always find new ways to assess how our students are learning, how they are receiving information, and what they are getting out of books that are read to them or that they read to themselves. It's easy to say, "I know my student understands this idea," but in reality, we need proof and instructional data in order to confirm our thoughts about the students we know so well.

Assessing your students' reading comprehension requires teachers to be creative, use their students' abilities to answer questions and respond, and be open to whatever communication your student may give you during reading time. Assessing whether or not your student likes or enjoys a particular book is most likely a lot easier than actual facts, events, characters, or plot of a story. For some students, they may be able to answer questions regarding a story using sign language or their voice. For many of our students; however, this is not an option based on their developmental level.

Here are some examples:

Use objects that are included in your Literacy Kit or Story Box

- If you read the book "Worm Builds," show the student three object choices and ask, "Who builds the tower - Worm, Turtle, or Rat?"

Use symbols that the child already has in their repertoire

- After you read a story that has a weather theme, you can ask "What is the weather in this story?"   You can then use familiar symbols such as a raincoat to represent rain, a mitten to represent cold weather, and sunglasses to represent sunny weather. By using symbols that the student already knows, you are then creating a "crossover" or connection between calendar symbols and story themes.

Use the "extension activities" that you have created to go along with your Literacy Kit

- Using a communication board that goes with the book, "*Worm Builds*," see if your student can expand on a simple story and answer more complex questions. In this case, the book is about worm's tower getting knocked down. The communication board is about how he feels when it tumbles down.

Check your students' vocabulary comprehension.

- Using the verbs from a sports article, use the communication board from your literacy kit to play a ball game and you will see if they have learned the article vocabulary. By being creative and using the materials that are around you, there are many ways to assess your students' comprehension for the stories that are being read.

Literacy Outcomes for Students who are Deafblind

As a result of increased exposure to accessible books and other literacy materials, there are many outcomes for the student who is deafblind. They may gain understanding, knowledge, and information from text and print.

Also, the student may gain awareness that symbols represent meaning, and expand that awareness to many other symbols (print, pictures, Braille). Students who are deafblind can learn that stories come from print, learn the structure of a story (beginning, middle, end), and learn the difference between the concepts of "book language" as opposed to "conversational language." Book handling skills and left to right sequencing skills are also developed when the student is given appropriate access to books. Finally and most importantly, students who are deafblind can discover that books are actually fun and enjoyable, and may eventually choose reading as a leisure time activity.

Functions of Reading and Writing—the WHY

When we consider our reasons for reading and writing today, it is obvious that all persons require some level of literacy skills in order to function in society.   Given appropriate materials and expectations, many students who are deafblind are able to gain proficiency in some (if not all) of the following areas (containing some form of symbols or print):

Function of Reading/Writing	Example for student who is Deafblind
Organizing and supporting memory	calendars, lists
Acquiring information	newspapers, phone books
Instructions	recipes, directions
Financial negotiations	checks, bank statements
Entertainment	comic books, magazines, internet
Identifying things or places	signs, labels, packages
Self-expression, dealing with emotions, creating/maintaining relationships	letters, journals, emails

Conclusion

It is important that all children be granted the chance to excel in all curriculum areas. It is also apparent however, that many students who are deafblind face challenges that other students do not. As teachers, we must use our creativity to give all of our students the opportunity to access literacy materials in a mode that is most appropriate for their language and communication abilities.

Through our teaching, we have learned that believing that "every child is a reader" is the first place to start. By giving students who are deafblind access and exposure to words and stories, we can open a new chapter in their lives just waiting to be opened.
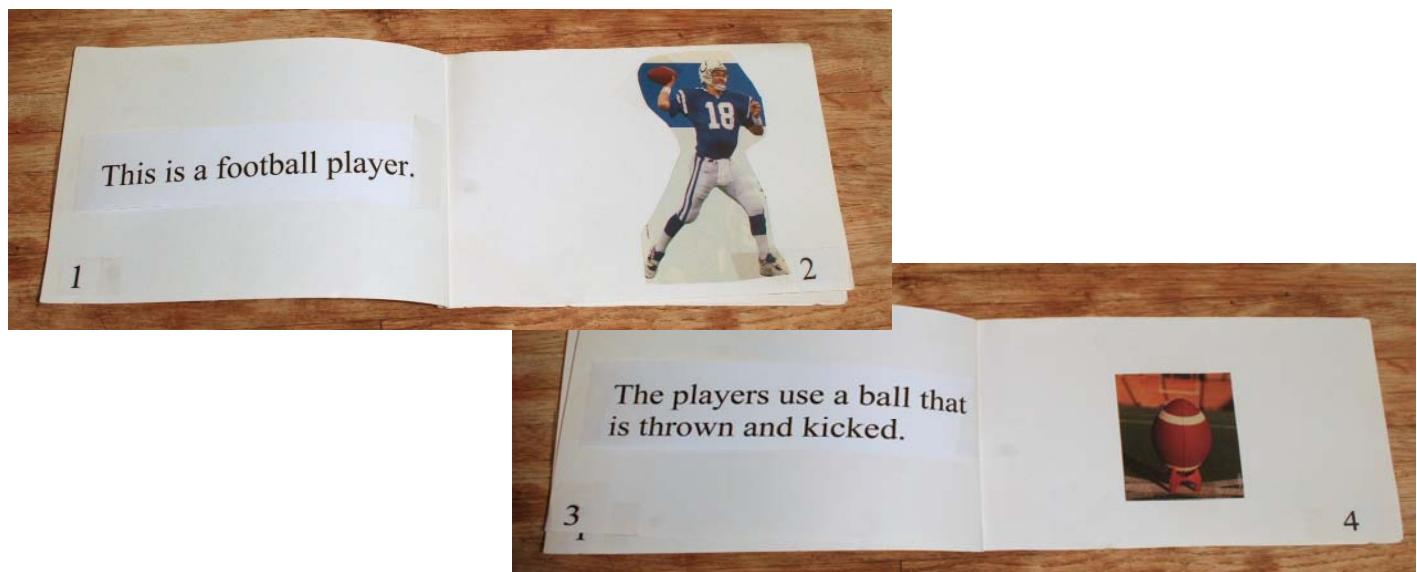
The CARROLL CENTER for the Blind

ANNOUNCES COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES

Submitted By: Lisa Chiango

If you need training in popular Windows-based applications and use a screen reader or screen magnification program to access your computer, you'll be happy to learn of the courses now available at Carroll Tech.

Courses at Carroll Tech are designed for you if you:

- Need training in Microsoft Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint or any of a number of Braille, speech or large print devices
- Are a first-time user or need to upgrade your knowledge
- Use the screen readers, JAWS For Windows or Window-Eyes or the screen magnifiers Zoom Text or MAGic

Membership is free and open to everyone. Once you are a member, you can begin the qualification process.

The next step is to complete a 50 question pre-qualifying test of your computer skills to ensure that you have the necessary background knowledge for all of the class content.

After qualifying, take a look at the classes page, where the catalogue of courses, syllabi, and start dates are available. Instructor led courses take place four times a year. In addition to the standard mix of online reading, videos, exercises and quizzes, you will have the opportunity to participate in audio chat sessions with your instructor and fellow students.

Courses are also available on a self paced basis where you can work your way through the lessons a quickly or slowly as your schedule will allow. Self paced courses start when you register and end after 12 weeks.

Before you register for a class, you may want more details of just what is involved in the course. What topics will be covered? How much reading will be required and how it is accessed? Will there be any homework or tests? What exactly is an "audio chat session?"

After you read the course description and syllabus, the best way to get the answers to these more specific questions is to take a guided tour of a typical class. There, you can watch a video, read a chapter for a lesson, take a short quiz, and listen in on an audio chat session.

Interested consumers should have basic keyboarding skills and have access to a computer and software when they return home.

Training for students after school or during school vacations can be arranged.

Contact: Dina Rosenbaum at 1-800-852-3131 ext. 238 for an application or further information. www.carrolltech.org

RACHAEL'S READING LIST
(AGE 17)

By Rachael's Mom

1. Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Author: Barry Denenberg
2. The Diary of Bess Brennan, Author: Perkins School, 1932
3. Seeing Lessons, the Story of Abigail Carter & America's First School for Blind People
4. Little Town on the Prairie, Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder
5. Morris & Buddy, the Story of the First Seeing Eye Dog, Author: Becky Hall
6. The Million Dollar Putt, Dan Gutman (12 year old boy and golf)
7. From Charlie's Point of View, Author: Richard Scrimger (Young Adult Mystery)
8. From Bat Sonar to Canes for the Blind, Author: Toney Allman
9. Knots on a Counting Rope, Author: Bill Martin Jr, and (Native American Grandfather, John Archbault and a blind 5 year old grandson and horses)

FAMILY DAY AT BERLIN ORCHARDS *-CONTINUED*

Family day was so exciting, meeting old friends and having the opportunity for families to make new ones. This year the New England Center Deafblind Project (NEC) in collaboration with the Massachusetts Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (MAPVI) held our Annual Apple Picking event together. Families gathered on Saturday, October 13, 2007 at Berlin Orchards in beautiful Berlin, Massachusetts. The weather cooperated and it was a wonderful day. Like years past families enjoyed hayrides and apple cider, donuts and delicious apples of all varieties. Each child received their own pumpkin to carve and each family received a bag of apples! Over 84 people from the New England Center Deafblind Project attended. Fun was had by all! Hope to see more families there next year!

Win Edwards enjoying Family Day at Berlin Orchards.

NEW ENGLAND CENTER DEAFBLIND PROJECT DIRECTORY

Main Office - NEC
New England Center Deafblind Project
175 No. Beacon St
Watertown, MA 02472
Tel: 617/672-7354
Fax: 617/972-7354

Barbara Mason
Project Director
barbara.mason@perkins.org
617/972-7502

Tracy Evans Luiselli
Project Coordinator
tracy.luiselli@perkins.org
617/972-7517

Cheryl Harvey
Project Assistant
NEC@perkins.org
617/972-7515

Connecticut - BESB
Board of Education Services for the Blind
184 Windsor Avenue
Windsor, CT 06095
Tel: 800/842-4510
Fax: 860/602-4030

Karen Olson
Ed. Consultant
karen.olson@ct.gov
860/602-4191

Kathy Morgan
Ed. Consultant
katherine.morgan@ct.gov
860/602-4185

Janette Peracchio
Family Specialist
janette.peracchio@perkins.org
860/602-4128

Maine - CCM
Catholic Charities Maine
1066 Kenduskeag Ave
Bangor, ME 04401
Tel: 207/941-2855

Jean Small
Director
jsmall@ccmaine.org
207/941-2855

Massachusetts - NEC
New England Center Deafblind Project
175 No. Beacon St
Watertown, MA 02472
Tel: 617/672-7354
Fax: 617/972-7354

Susan DeCaluwe
Ed. Consultant
susan.decaluwe@perkins.org
617/972-7515

New Hampshire - ATECH
ATECH
117 Pleasant St
Dolloff Bldg.
Concord, NH 03301
Tel: 603/226-2900
Fax: 603/226-2907

Cate Weir, ATECH Project Director
catew@atechservices.com

Kim Conlon
Ed. Consultant
kimc@atechservices.com

Janet Halley
Program Director
M.I.C.E.
PO Box 2274
Concord, NH 03302
603/228-1028
miceprogram@juno.com

Providing Technical Assistance to Children, Youth & Families in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts & New Hampshire

FUTURE TRAININGS, WORKSHOPS & EVENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NEW ENGLAND CENTER

Save the Date

In Connecticut:
Jan 31, 2008, **"Cortical Vision Impairment: Observation of Students in Three Phases of CVI"** – ½ Day
        presented by CVI Advisors, BESB Windsor, CT; Contact Karen Olson at 860-602-4191
March 29, 2008 – **Parents as Partners Conference**, BESB, Windsor, CT; Contact Karen Olson at 860-602-4191
April 3, 2008 – **MH Series "Overview of the Van Dijk Methodology**" Part II – Wethersfield, CT

In Massachusetts:
February 7, 14, 28, March 6, 2008, **4 PT Deafblind Training**, Schwartz Center for Children Dartmouth, MA
March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 2008, **4 PT Deafblind Training**, Perkins Training Center, Watertown, MA
        Contact Betsy Bixler at 617-972-7213
March 12 – **Focus Conference**, Taunton, MA contact Ann Flynn: AEFLYNN@aol.com or phone 781-279-3141
March 29, 2008 - **Transition Conference,** Perkins School for the Blind see website www.perkins.org
July 2008 – NEC **Summer Institute** – TBD
TBD – **INSITE Training**, Susan DeCaluwe@perkins.org or call 617-972-7516
October 18, 2008 – **Discover Conference**, Perkins School for the Blind see website www.perkins.org

In Maine: Contact: Tracy Evans Luiselli at (617) 972-7517 or email: tracy.luiselli@perkins.org

In New Hampshire: for more info www.nhvhn.org contact NHVN 603-226-2900
February 7, 2008 - **Developing a Communication Portfolio for a Student with Deafblindness**

For MA training registration contact Cheryl Harvey at 617-972-7515 or email: NEC@perkins.org

**All 4 Part Trainings require a minimum of 20 people to hold the training. Call if you would like to
sponsor training at your site. Register early.**

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