



IN FOCUS

MISSOURI DEAFBLIND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Spring 2010

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Using Sensory Approaches to Teach Students with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities

Students with deafblindness and multiple disabilities require a multi-sensory approach to learning. Due to the multiple disabilities that they possess, these students have limited responses to their interactions with others and their environments. Therefore, instruction must focus on strategies to heighten their response to cues in their environment while strengthening their senses

that are not limited and using their other limited senses as much as possible. Let's look at some techniques to support a multi-sensory approach to teaching these students.

Arousal:

Due to the limitations in their ability to respond to stimuli in the environment, often these children need strategies to stimulate their arousal to stimuli in their environment. Arousal may increase by utilizing multi-sensory techniques. Through the introduction

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of tactile and/or vibrating materials, students' level of alertness may increase.

Sometimes the students may be overreacting to the environment and arousal state may need to be calmed. In this instance, the students need to be exposed to sensory techniques to calm them. These activities may be reducing stimuli, massaging and other relaxing deep pressure techniques.

Positioning:

The students need to be positioned in equipment that best meets their educational needs for the activity and provides them the necessary support to engage in the instructional process. Knowing your students' motoric needs are critical for positioning materials as well as positioning the students so that they are comfortable and are able to make responses to instructional demands.

Know your students' visual needs. Sometimes materials may need to be presented close to the student so they can make reliable responses. If the student has limitations in their visual field then materials may need to be positioned further away from the student so they can see the whole object. With your teacher for the visually impaired (TVI), assess the students' best positions to present materials by presenting the students' favorite items to them. Take trials of the presentation by beginning in center and move to the sides.

Does the student see the object when presented at these locations? What is the range? Can the student see better peripherally or when in the center? Does the student respond when items are presented within a few inches or 2 feet?

Also, know your student's hearing needs. Assess various sounds and which side the student responds best, right or left.



Response Time:

Students with deafblindness and multiple disabilities require more time to respond to demands made upon them. Their disabilities are sensory based. Therefore their processing time to take in

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information, understand the messages and respond to them takes longer than their peers. Allow the student time to respond. Wait several (5 to 10) seconds to allow them to respond before bombarding them with more information. You do not want to give them sensory overload and increase any frustration.

Behavior:

All behaviors have a purpose. Behavior is communication. When the student has deafblindness and other disabilities, it becomes harder to determine the message and sometimes identify the behavior. Students who are deafblind may not respond to instruction by looking or making vocalizations. Therefore, the instructional staff has to look for other behavior indicators for the students' understanding of demands placed on them. Jane Korsten, author of Every Move Counts, discussed this idea of understanding subtle movements of the students to understand



students' behaviors and messages. Students may show awareness by changes in breathing, a move of the arm, grimace, ceasing activity, etc. Knowing what these messages mean take time to assess and observe. When does this sign occur, under what conditions does it occur, what environment did it occur, who was present, etc.

Communication:

Students who are deafblind require individualized approaches to communication. No one technique will serve for all students. Some students may have enough vision to learn and use sign language. Others may have other limitations and need modified sign language techniques to accommodate their visual field needs, such as a communication presented within chest area of speaker. Some students may need tactile spelling in the palm of the hand. This is a high level concept for students who have multiple disabilities and they may not grasp the concept.

Other students may have enough hearing to learn oral communication to communicate needs or need special accommodations such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and/or FM systems in the classroom.

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Often when discussing students who have multiple disabilities, we consider other forms of communication. Pictures may be used and/or communication devices. Be aware that the presentation of the icons must be able to support the visual needs of the student, such as non-glare surface, simple black/white icons, etc. Sometimes students may be able to learn to use a communication device, but their vision is too poor to learn to differentiate the icons. Then consider using textures and/or positioning of icons/objects to communicate the correct grids to select on the device.

Resonance Boards are hollow boxes or boards that may be used for student to begin learning cause-effect concepts and implement coactive movements. By having the student positioned on the board, staff may hit the box for the student to feel the vibration. This can begin simple communication. A hit on the board may mean to have the student to come to you. Students may learn to duplicate a rhythm or perform a cause-effect activity. Other students may increase mobility and learn to find the edges and where the boundaries are on the board to identify their environment. Another student may move to find the sound source. Using a resonance board can be fun and untap many cognitive areas of the student.

Although these are not all the techniques that are effective practices for students with deafblindness and multiple disabilities, these are a few considerations you may wish to make as you plan your instruction for students with deafblindness.

Resources:

Brown, David; CDBS Educational Specialist. "Follow the Child – Approaches to Assessing the Functional Vision and Hearing of Young Children with Congenital Deaf-Blindness" **California Deaf-Blind Resources Vol. 10 No. 9.** Winter 2001.

Brown, David. "*Resonance Boards*" **Deaf-Blind Perspectives, Vol. 10 Issue 2.** Teaching Research Division, 345 N. Monmouth Ave., Monmouth, Oregon 97361. Winter 2002-2003.

Parents' Bill of Rights

The following document is available on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website for parents to understand their rights during the IEP process.



This document does not confer any right or rights beyond those conferred by federal or state law and is intended for informational purposes only. For additional information, contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education at (573) 751-0699 or webrepliespeco@dese.mo.gov.

January 1, 2010

As a parent of a child with a disability, you have the right to:

1. Attend individualized education program (IEP) meetings and represent your child's interests.
2. Have an advocate or expert present at individualized education program (IEP) meetings.
3. Receive a copy of your child's evaluation, disagree with it, and request one independent educational evaluation at public expense.
4. Provide a written report from outside sources as part of the evaluation process.
5. Examine all education records pertaining to your child and be provided with a copy of the individualized education program.
6. Disagree with the decision of the individualized education program (IEP) team and pursue complaint procedures, including: filing a child complaint with the Department of

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Elementary and Secondary Education, state paid mediation, have an impartial due process hearing, and appeal the due process decision to the court.

7. Participate in reviews of the individualized education programs (IEPs) and in any decision to change any aspects of the IEP, as well as receive a written notice of action before a change in your child's educational placement or the provision of a free and appropriate public education.
8. Have your child placed in the least restrictive environment and in a general education classroom to the greatest extent appropriate.
9. Request an accommodation to provide effective communications if you have limited English language proficiency.
10. A free appropriate public education for your child with an individualized education program designed to meet your child's unique needs, which may include, but not be limited to, special education and related services, such as assistive technology devices and services; transportation; speech pathology services; audiology services; interpreting services; psychological services, including behavioral interventions; physical therapy; occupational therapy; recreation, including therapeutic recreation; counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling; orientation and mobility services; school health services; school nurse services; social work services; parent counseling and training; and, medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes.





New Statue of Helen Keller

A new statue of Helen Keller was unveiled at the U.S Capitol on October 7, 2009. This bronze statue depicts a young Helen Keller pumping water at her family's well. Lawmakers praised Helen Keller as a trailblazer and inspiration for persons with disabilities. "The statue," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, will "always remind us that people must be respected for what they can do rather than judged for what they cannot."

SPARKLE



The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project is happy to announce that families may now receive reimbursement from the Family Involvement Fund (FIF) for participation in the Project SPARKLE program. Project SPARKLE is an acronym for "Supporting Parent Access to Resources, Knowledge, Linkages, and Education." Project SPARKLE program is a collaboration between the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project and the SKI*HI Institute at Utah State University

to support parents who are interested training for parents of infants, children, and youth with deafblindness.

Project SPARKLE is offered at no costs to families. A family may receive a \$25 stipend for completion of each of the following Project SPARKLE sections: Pre-training Questionnaire, Deafblindness, Vision, Hearing, Touch, Concept Development and Intervention. An additional \$50 stipend will be issued upon completion of the Child Profile.

Project SPARKLE combines the use of DVDs, the Internet and a parent guidebook. Family members participate in Project SPARKLE at their own pace and at times that work best for them.

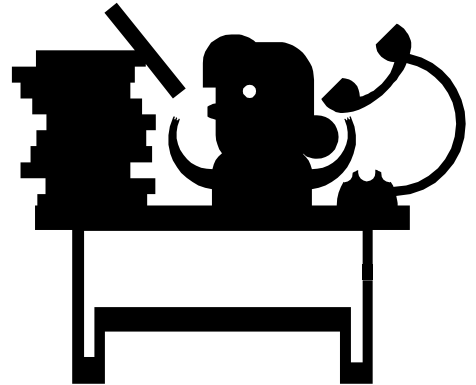
A DVD player and access to the Internet are required. (NOTE: Families are responsible for any charges for access to the Internet.)

Contact for more information:

Ginny Williams – Deafblind Family Specialist

573-295-4808

ginwilliams@aol.com



Transitions: AFB Teen Series

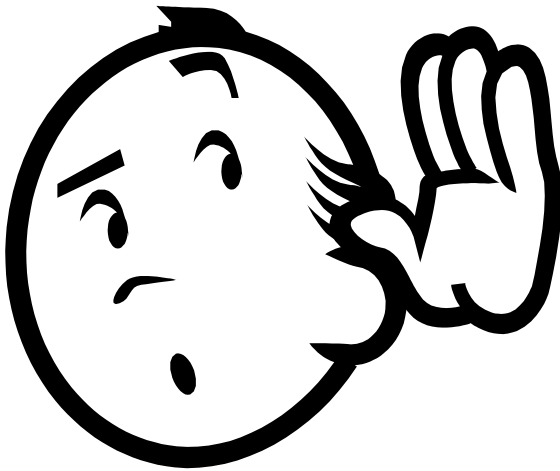
A key discussion item for students' Individual Educational Plans (IEP) starting at age fourteen and older is transition planning. The transition from high school to young adulthood is a critical stage for all teenagers; this stage requires extra planning and goal setting. Factors to consider include post-secondary education, the development of career and vocational skills, as well as the ability to live independently.

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has a link on their website for teens preparing for their post-secondary goals. Students may go directly to the website and watch videos about preparing for the world of work that were co-produced by CareerConnect and Braille Institute. The films talk about the importance of their first jobs and finding employment. The film also provides detailed narration if someone is unable to see the footage of transcripts may be downloaded. To view these films go to <http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=7&TopicID=268&DocumentID=4471>.

Cochlear Implant Study

The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project is participating with the **Children Who Are Deaf-Blind with Cochlear Implants Project**. This project is studying the impact of cochlear implants for children with combined hearing and vision loss. Through the research, they seek to determine the benefits and challenges of cochlear implants, plus work to identify effective strategies that enhance communication and language development for those children with a cochlear implant. They are seeking young children to participate in their study. If you are considering a cochlear implant for your child with both a vision and hearing loss and the child is under the age of eight (8) years old, then you may be eligible to participate in the study. The research has several partners including The Teaching Research Institute Western Oregon University, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, East Carolina University and University of Kansas-Life Span Institute in Parsons, Kansas.

These researchers have conducted research already with over 100 children. Based on their research they have determined a number of factors that influence whether a child may benefit from a cochlear implant: These factors include:



- Age of implantation is important; the younger the child is usually better
- Length of time a child has had the implant
- Consistency of the use of the implant and regular updating of the device mapping
- Amount of time family members talk to the child at home
- Frequency and quality of services to increase communication and language

Participation is voluntary and all information that families provide is confidential. In appreciation for participation, families receive \$100.00 each time their child is assessed. If you are interested in learning more about the project, please contact Susan Bonner, Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project, (314) 776-4320 ext 3255, sbonner@msb.k12.mo.us.

Hand In Hand

The 2009-2010 class of educational teams participating in Hand In Hand Course was completed on April 22, 2010. We had six (6) educational teams participating supporting seven (7) students. The course was held in Springfield, Missouri at the newly expanded and remodeled Southwest Center for Independent Living. The teams represented school districts from Springfield, Branson, Lee's Summit, Special School District of St. Louis County and Missouri School for

Severely Disabled.

The educational teams met for a total of seven days over three sessions that were held in October, January and April. At the end of each session, the teams developed an action plan addressing how they plan to implement the concepts learned during the course. Mentors, who are also instructors for the course, are assigned to each team. The mentors provide follow up consultation with the teams and visit the teams at their schools to provide direct technical assistance, free of charge to the schools. Several teams are looking to address follow up assistance from the Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project next school year as several staff people will change and/or anticipation of progress the student makes and what changes in instructional strategies may be needed.



**Team completing activity during
Hand In Hand Course**

Hand In Hand: Understanding Deafblindness for Education Teams of Students Who Are Deafblind,

is a course, totaling seven days throughout the academic year, that provides instruction on the theory and practice for the education of students with deafblindness. The course is intended for the educational teams of students with deafblindness (including parents/family members). The course combines self-studies, homework assignments, and action planning with on-site mentoring, and three face-to-face sessions (totaling seven days) with course

instructors. Participants apply acquired knowledge regarding visual impairment, auditory impairment, communication and movement to the programming of the students they serve with the dual sensory losses. The location of the course rotates each year around the state of Missouri. The course is offered free of charge and all training materials (including text) are provided by the Missouri Deafblind Project. Optional two hour graduate credit is available from Lindenwood University. Family members are provided financial support (mileage, housing, and meals).

For more information about attending the course, please contact Susan Bonner at sbonner@msb.k12.mo.us.

Calendar of Events

Summer, 2010

Date: June 8-9, 2010
Topic: See the Sound/Visual Phonics
Location: Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, Missouri
Audience: Classroom teachers, teachers of the of students with disabilities especially hearing impaired and literacy and language problems
Cost: Free
Contact:
<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspced/EffectivePractices/taining.html>

Fall, 2010

Date: September 22-23, 2010
Topic: 6th National Organization Change Forum: Employment First! The Audacity of Change
Location: Hilton Hotel Downtown, Indianapolis, Indiana
Audience: State Teams, state Vocational Rehabilitation, community providers, LEA, self-advocates and interested parties.
Contact: Pat Rogan at progan@iupui.edu



Date: October, 26-29, 2010;
January 26-27, 2011 & April 6-7, 2011
Topic: Hand In Hand: Course for Educational teams Supporting Students with Deafblindness
Location: Independence, Missouri
Audience: Teachers of students with deafblindness and their educational teams including parents
Contact: Susan Bonner, Missouri Deafblind Project 314-776-4320, ext. 3255;
sbonner@msb.k12.mo.us

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Missouri School for the Blind
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In Focus

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